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THE MORNING STAR

THE

MORNING STAR;

OR,

SYMBOLS OF CHRIST.

BY

WILLIAM M. THAYER,

AUTHOR OF "HINTS FOR THE HOUSEHOLD," "SPOTS ON OUR FEASTS OF CHARITY," "PASTOR'S WEDDING GIFT," ETC.

"Guiding Star! still give thy light;
Lead me through the stormy night."

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PREFACE.

THE symbolical parts of the Scriptures are invested with peculiar attractions. A familiar acquaintance with them can scarcely fail to increase respect and love for the Bible. This is especially true of the symbols of Christ, as significant representations of his character and office-work. They surround him with new charms as Mediator and Saviour. He never appears more emphatically "the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely," than when he is viewed through some of his more appropriate emblems.

A few of the more prominent symbols of Christ are contained in this volume. There are others which the Christian may study with pleasure and profit. Not one can be found on the sacred page that is not worthy of close and patient examination.

The same truth may be found in different symbols. Where this is the case, the author has endeavored to avoid repetition by developing the truth in one place only, with a brief allusion, or entire omission, in others.

Each emblem has usually one special thought or truth to communicate. While the writer has borne this fact in mind, he has also discussed other lessons which the several examples treated appear to contain.

The same text of Scripture may establish or illustrate a truth under two or more symbols. In a few instances proof texts are thus applied in this volume, for the reason that they are particularly appropriate in more than one place.

If these pages serve to magnify the beauty and wisdom of the word of God in the view of a single reader, or cause the humblest believer or unbeliever to think more of Christ, the author will cheerfully endure the censure of critics, and never repent of having committed these thoughts to print.

W. M. T.

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SYMBOLS OF CHRIST.

I.

THE MORNING STAR.

"I am . . . the bright and morning star."

Hail to his rising from afar;
He is THE BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR;
His healing beams, ye nations, bless;
He is the Sun of Righteousness;
To save his people from their sins,
Jesus his suffering life begins;
Ere long, as Christ our sacrifice,
The Holy and the Just One dies.

MONTGOMERY.

THE stars are objects of deepest interest to men. From the earliest ages they have been regarded with admiration, and even with superstitious reverence. "The untutored savage, though he regards the stars only as so many lamps suspended

from the azure vault, to enlighten and cheer his abode, is struck with admiration of the gift, and, with a heart overflowing with gratitude, falls down to bless the Great Spirit who bestowed it. Ignorance and astonishment have gone still farther; and in almost all nations traces are to be found of the worship of the heavenly bodies — a rude but not altogether unnatural form of religion to the uninstructed mind. The 'hosts of heaven' are assuredly the most striking and appropriate visible emblems of the glory of the Almighty Unseen; and where the mind has been unaccustomed to reflect on any objects but those that strike the senses, the mistake may without difficulty be accounted for. Certainly such a belief is neither so strange nor so revolting as the worship of cows and serpents, or even of men and devils, with examples of which the history of heathen mythology abounds."*

There is, then, a good reason for the appellation which Christ gave to himself — "THE BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR." Had he simply compared himself to a star, without designating any particular one, there would have been appropriateness in that; for the smallest star is an object of beauty and splendor, and suggests thoughts of purity and glory. Its

* Dr. Duncan.

mission is, to shed light upon the earth, to cheer and bless its inhabitants. But the "morning star" is the brightest and most glorious of all the planets. This is known to astronomers as Venus, and has been regarded by them queen of the starry hosts. Hence, as a symbol of Christ it is appropriate in a marked degree. He is "the chiefest among ten thousand," and the one "altogether lovely;" "a crown of glory" and "a diadem of beauty unto the residue of his people." He is the "star out of Jacob," foretold by the ancient seer.

But the morning star is *the harbinger of day;* and it is this, particularly, which makes it an appropriate symbol of Christ. As this luminary heralds the breaking light, so the Saviour, by his coming, announces an eternal day. He is the moral luminary that rises upon the night of sin and sorrow, to show that "the day is at hand." In this light we shall view Christ in this paper.

First, however, we shall notice some of those passages of Scripture in which a similar figure is employed.

In reference to the different degrees of glory to be enjoyed by saints in heaven, it is added, "For one star differeth from another star in glory." The glorified saints are thus compared with the stars,

and are said to differ as the latter do in splendor. Indeed, this figure may be employed of saints on earth. They are called the "light of the world." They are appointed to shed moral light upon surrounding darkness. In Revelation, the pastors of the seven churches of Asia are called "the seven stars." The different degrees of glory that saints will enjoy above is probably determined by the different degrees of holiness which they possess on earth. In this respect they differ as "one star differeth from another star." They are like Christ in moral likeness. He is the morning star, and they are the lesser lights. Viewing these figurative allusions in this connection, there appears to be great propriety in making the morning star a symbol of the Saviour. It is adding harmony to beauty.

There is another text in which a similar figure is employed. It is the prophet's language in regard to the reward of the faithful. "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever." Here, all that is pure and bright in a saint's everlasting inheritance is presented under the figure of a star. It is a promise held out to the believer, to inspire hope and beget

fidelity. The reader cannot fail to perceive the wisdom of such a purpose. There is scarcely an object in the whole range of nature so well suited to appeal to our sense of the beautiful, pure, and grand, as a star; so that it may well be employed to symbolize the best and brightest experience in store for the true follower of Christ.

Other texts might be quoted to illustrate the use that is made of this class of figures in the Scriptures; but the foregoing accomplish this as really as more.

Let us, then, return to the particular subject of this paper, — Christ, as the morning star, heralds eternal day. This implies that it is now moral night — a truth that is frequently expressed in the Bible. In the passage, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand," the same idea is presented. The whole duration of man's existence, here and hereafter, is thus divided into two parts — *night* and *day*. It has been night for a long time. The darkness has been deep, impenetrable. Thousands have inquired, "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?" And Christ, the morning star, answers, "The morning cometh." Streaks of the breaking light already appear.

"O, long-expected day, begin;
Dawn on this world of woe and sin."

Perhaps, at the present age of the world, this symbol of Christ is more apt than ever before; for we have reached a period in human progress that may justly be thought to precede immediately the promised dawn. It is not exactly the twilight hour; it is too dark for that; but it is the time when the morning star is seen fairest and brightest. It is night, but it is far spent. The morning has not dawned, but its forerunner is in full view.

In what particulars is it night? How is Christ the harbinger of day? These are the questions to be answered.

In what respects is it night?

It is a night of *ignorance*. We speak of great advancement in knowledge; and it is true that the present age is distinguished in this regard. Still, in comparison with the unfathomed depths of knowledge, it is a period of ignorance. How little is known of the works of God! Here and there a great philosopher has entered the storehouse of science, and brought therefrom things "new and old," to awaken astonishment and admiration. But the multitude, how ignorant! Indeed, comparatively speaking, how little the wise men themselves know of God and his works! Let Newton, the prince of philosophers, bear witness; and he says,

after a life well spent in study and research, "I feel like one who has amused himself with gathering pebbles on the shore, while the great ocean of truth lay undiscovered before me." Interrogate him concerning the most familiar branches of natural philosophy, and a few inquiries bring him where he is compelled to say, "I do not know." "A little child can ask questions which a philosopher cannot answer." So ignorant is man!

Inquire of Herschel, whose life-study was the science of the stars, whether he has fathomed the depths and measured the heights of knowledge pertaining to the solar system; and he replies, "Even the imagination is enfeebled by the magnitude of its efforts, and can keep no longer on the wing through those mighty tracts which shoot far beyond what eye hath seen, or the heart of man hath conceived — which sweep endlessly along, and merge into an awful and mysterious infinity." Ask him what he knows of the morning star, which is the symbol of Christ — whether it is a habitable world, and if so, whether God has ever proclaimed to its inhabitants, "Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces." His silence proves that it is a night of ignorance.

Summon Franklin, and put a thousand interroga-

tions concerning the electric fluid, and less than half of them he is able to answer. Call Linnæus, the great botanist, who studied the plants and flowers of almost every clime, and he will confess that his mind falters over the structure of a single leaf. And thus, through every department of human knowledge, the wisest are proved comparatively short-sighted and ignorant. The atom of dust on which they tread, the ray of light on which they gaze, the delicious fragrance which they smell, the sensation of joy or sorrow which they experience, — all present impenetrable mysteries to their understandings.

How little, too, is known of the ways of Providence, and that little necessarily confined to the narrow limits of our experience and observation! True, the light of revelation falls upon our pathway, so that we may not stumble upon the "dark mountains." And yet "we see through a glass darkly." It is walking by starlight, and not under the blaze of the full-orbed sun.

Consider an event of common experience — the loss of property or the death of a friend. We believe that the smallest event is connected with some wise and good design of Jehovah, as really as the most important occurrence. However isolated

it may appear to be, we fully believe that it has its place in the divine plan, as a link in a chain, and that, of course, it is inseparable from the grand and impressive events of Providence. Now, with this thought impressed upon the mind, let me inquire, reader, how much you know of the death of a friend. You know, indeed, that it has torn and well nigh crushed your heart; but how far can you trace that event in the plan of Providence? How far into the future can you see, to learn its bearings upon the things of God or man? Not a single step. Impenetrable darkness baffles every effort to trace its future relations. "His way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known." "Clouds and darkness are round about him." "No man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end." "O, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" You saw your friend in the agonies of death; but how little you know of that mysterious visitant which took him hence! How poorly you can appreciate the feelings of a friend in the "mortal agony"!

From things temporal turn to things eternal. In eternity there are no mists and clouds to obscure

the vision. Knowledge is not the "hid treasure" that it is in this world of sin and tears. "For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known." Mistakes, errors, and mysteries are unknown beyond the grave. A clear, unclouded intellect grasps the realities of that eternal scene, undimmed by sin, unwearied by years. Its immortal powers continue to expand with the unceasing roll of cycles, receiving larger and larger accessions of knowledge as it advances into the infinite. The whole boundless realm of truth lies open before it, with no obstacle in the way of its attainment, no difficulty to damp its burning ardor. Hence ignorance reigns not there, but perishes in the general conflagration that rolls the heavens together as a scroll.

Then, in comparison with the intelligence that will characterize immortal beings hereafter, we are now groping our way through a night of ignorance. There is not a thing that we know, only "*in part.*"

It is now a *night of sin.* We are wont to describe the reign of sin as moral darkness. In like manner the Scriptures speak of it. Men who love sin, and roll it as a sweet morsel under their tongues, are said to love "darkness rather than

light, because their deeds are evil." Professing Christians, who wander in the ways of sin, are said to "walk in darkness." The righteous, as the "children of light," are set in opposition to the wicked, the "children of darkness." Christ calls the exercise of Satan's power "the power of darkness." And in the following passage it is employed to express the dominion of sin, and the slavery of the devil, to which the unrenewed are subjected: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."

There can be no mistake, then, that it is now *night*, for sin rules yet "with a rod of iron." It darkens the understanding, and pollutes the heart, wherever mankind abide. No shore is too remote, no climate too serene, no abode too sacred, to debar its entrance. It mingles a bitter with every sweet, a sorrow with every joy, and death pangs with every pulsation of life. It tampers with the fondest ties, alienates the purest affections, and agonizes the truest heart. It is a cruel, merciless, vindictive tyrant when it is not an artful and deceitful siren. Its foul breath converts the fairest garden of hope and virtue into a howling waste, where hideous creeping things nestle and sting. In the language

of another, "Sin formed the volcano, the earthquake, the hurricane, the pestilence which mows down the population of cities and empires! Sin inflicts every pang! Sin nerves every death throe! Sin stains and blanches every corpse! Sin weaves every shroud! Sin shapes every coffin! Sin digs every grave! Sin writes every epitaph! Sin paints every hatchment! Sin sculptures every monument! Sin feeds every worm! The waste and the havoc of centuries that are gone, and the waste and the havoc of centuries yet to come, all reverberate, in one awful voice, 'Death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.'"

Such is sin; and where it reigns it is night.

It is now a *night of sorrow.* I need not say that the fondest ties of life are liable to be sundered. Admit that there are numerous and blessed joys flowing from the relations of love; that there is much in friendship and virtue to sweeten the bitter of life — yea, that earth scenes have their grand reality, alluring and even fascinating; still, there is a dark cloud that overshadows all, and from its portentous bosom comes a voice to keep us ever mindful of the inevitable truth, "ONCE TO DIE." There it is, in the pathway of every probationer, a great fact, an irreversible decree of God — "once

to die!" A cloud in the sky of earthly splendor! A deep and awful pause in the restless life of the busy throng! There is no such thing as blindness to this last item of our earthly experience. "Eat, drink, and be merry," and still death approaches. Rear castles, enter the race for wealth, anticipate twenty, thirty, forty years more of life for the world, and yet there is stern, inexorable, irresistible death to be encountered. There is an awful majesty, too, in his coming; for fleets and armies are blown away by his breath, and mighty kings and millionaires, in common with subjects and sons of penury, die at his nod.

There is not a loved one on earth whose history will not close, like that of Abraham, with the memorable words, "*And he died.*" It is the last paragraph in every complete biography. The fond mother may read it on the cradle. The bride and bridegroom may see it in the tie that makes them one. The confiding child beholds it on a parent's brow. And thus on; every friend, however dear and honored, bears about with him the fearful sentence, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return."

"Friend after friend departs;
Who hath not lost a friend?

There is no union here of hearts
That finds not here an end:
Were this frail world our final rest,
Living or dying, none were blest."

It is freely admitted that this view of death is modified when considered in connection with the hopes of the gospel. A Christian hope not only adds a "silver lining" to this "cloud of sorrow," but well nigh converts the cloud itself into a canopy of light, as often, at the close of day, the setting sun converts the fragments of the spent and broken storm into sheets of gold. Still, when we view the sorrows of the race just as they are, without reference to the past or future, we need not hesitate to present them under the figure of *night;* for it is proved by actual computation that about *one of the human family dies every second.* Each one is bound to some earthly friend. Large circles mourn the loss of multitudes. In this light, reflect upon this sundering of ties. How many heartstrings are broken in a single hour — in a day — in a year! Could we have arrayed before us all that are made mourners in one day, what a scene of grief it would be! Who could number the pangs? Whose eyes would not be turned to fountains of tears at the sight of such wailing and lamentation? Who, then, will deny that this is a night of sorrow?

How is Christ the harbinger of day? This is the second inquiry to be answered. A harbinger is the forerunner of a coming event. The morning star is the forerunner of the rising sun. So the advent of Christ foreshadows a day of "rest" and blessedness hereafter. He brought "life and immortality to light." His sufferings and death establish the truth of Christianity, and promise to man an inheritance in a land where "there is no night." Now we know that this moral darkness shall end, and a day of light and glory arise. This was true at the coming of Christ; and now that day is still nearer. The passing away of eighteen centuries has advanced the world far towards that consummation. How soon that day will dawn it is not ours to say. Whether many centuries will intervene or not is among unrevealed things. Still, taking a comparative view of the subject, we may safely regard Christ its forerunner, just as the morning star is harbinger of day.

While, as we have seen, ignorance still reigns, far and near, it is true that knowledge has greatly increased. Science is daily adding to its trophies, and learning, in all its departments, is advancing. During the last fifty years the world has undergone remarkable change in this regard. Art and science

have added new principles and facilities of progress to those heretofore discovered. The ocean steamer, the railway, and the telegraph have opened channels of communication as wonderful as they are simple. "The literature and influence of our country are all but universal. Two languages are at this moment the keys of intercourse with the whole world. The man that knows French and English may go every where, and converse in every capital. English, especially, is becoming more and more the language of the world." These facts indicate that the night of ignorance is passing away, and the brilliant, glorious morning of light rapidly approaching.

Add to this the signs of advancement in another direction — social and political changes — and Christ will appear still more the harbinger of day. "Revolutions sufficient in number and importance to fill the pages of the world's history for a century have been crowded into a few brief years. "The crash of falling dynasties has echoed from every shore. Crowns and coronets have fallen thick as meteors in the November 'shower of stars.' Thrones of tyranny have fallen without a visible foe. Despotic power has melted before popular rights. Absolutism in church and state has received its death

blow. Freedom of conscience, freedom of speech, freedom of the press — in other words, the liberty of being *men* and *Christians*, and of making others such — these have been the watchwords of revolution, the incentives to heroic and successful struggles with despotism. Though there may be many reverses, may we not adopt the expressive language of Robert Hall, 'The empire of darkness and of despotism has been smitten with a stroke that has sounded through the universe'? When we see whole kingdoms, after reposing for centuries on the lap of their rulers, start from their slumbers, the dignity of man rising up from depression, and tyrants trembling on their thrones, who can remain entirely indifferent, or fail to turn his eyes to a theatre so august and extraordinary? These are a kind of throes and struggles of nature to which it would be a sullenness to refuse our sympathy. Old foundations are breaking up; new edifices are rearing." *

Next, behold the triumphs of the gospel! How rapidly it has advanced during the last half century! What achievements the heralds of the cross are now making! In lands overspread with moral darkness a few years since, the institutions of reli-

* Home Evangelization, p. 145.

gion now flourish as luxuriantly as they do in this long-favored country. In Europe, Asia, Africa, and the islands of the sea, the tidings of salvation are spreading as on the wings of the wind. Heathen temples are crumbling to dust, and their dumb idols are dashed in pieces. Conversions are multiplying wherever the Word of Life is carried. We can almost say, as we look upon the marvellous salvation of the Sandwich Islands, that a nation is born in a day. And still the good work progresses. With thousands of Christian missionaries and teachers, and thousands of Christian presses sending forth a sanctified literature, and an ever-increasing liberality on the part of believers, we may confidently anticipate a still more rapid spread of Christianity in future.

Such are some of the assurances that the "morning cometh;" so that the symbol of Christ under discussion is appropriate and pleasing.

The true believer may tarry here for a moment, to reflect upon the glories of that day; for it is to him alone that the Saviour promises a day of bliss. To the wicked it will be "the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

"There shall be no night there." The blest inhabitants of that land, where eternal day reigns,

will have no need of slumber; for they never weary in their celestial employments. The mind will ponder and grasp the sublimest truths of that kingdom, and advance from one scale of intelligence to another, without losing its ardor. After ascending to heights of knowledge of which it is not possible to conceive at present, it will still retain the freshness of youth. Neither do they need, in that "better country," the sun to shine upon it; "for the glory of God lights it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

Sin does not enter there. The last stain of its defilement has been washed away in the "fountain filled with blood." The golden streets of the city, its jasper walls and gates of pearl, aptly emblematize the purity that dwells within. Who can fully appreciate the joy of a sinless land? Not a stain upon a soul, from the king on his throne to the smallest and humblest worshipper at his feet! Can it be that the grovelling mortals of earth will ever inhabit such a resplendent abode?

There is no sorrow there. It is the only land from which "sorrow and sighing flee away." The highest authority assures us that "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither

shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." Imagination falters in the attempt to conceive of the bliss of that "fair, distant land." To bathe in its river of delight, to drink from its fountains of joy, to join in its rapturous songs, to listen to its harping choirs, to praise God and the Lamb forever and ever, — this is what "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard," of the things that "God hath prepared for them that love him." O, what ineffable glories must be the portion of ransomed spirits! How rich, how sweet, how precious, surpassing all that fancy or fiction ever painted, is the experience of the sainted dead! In the language of the poet, —

"We speak of the realms of the blest,
Of that country so bright and so fair;
And oft are its glories confessed;
But what must it be *to be there!*

"We speak of its pathways of gold,
Of its walks decked with jewels so rare,
Of its wonders and pleasures untold;
But what must it be *to be there!*

"We speak of its freedom from sin,
From sorrow, temptation, and care,
From trials without and within;
But what must it be *to be there!*

"We speak of its service of love,
Of the robes which the glorified wear,
Of the church of the first-born above;
But what must it be *to be there!*

"Do thou, Lord, 'midst sorrow and woe,
Still for heaven my spirit prepare;
And shortly I also shall know
And feel what it is *to be there!*"

Often, at the close of life, devoted saints, with the eye of faith fixed upon the "bright and morning star," have caught glimpses of that eternal day. Its breaking light has flashed upon their vision, and the music of its harpers greeted their delighted ears. They could almost say, with enraptured John, "I looked, and behold a door was opened in heaven; and the first voice which I heard was, as it were, of a trumpet talking with me, which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the spirit; and behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat was, to look upon, like a jasper and a sardine stone; and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. And before the throne there was a sea of glass, like unto crystal. And the four and twenty elders fall down before him

that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

Thus Stephen, the proto-martyr, caught glimpses of what he was about to enjoy with Christ; for we read that, "being full of the Holy Ghost, he looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."

Such was the experience of the pious Janeway, who said, in the hour of dissolution, "Methinks I stand, as it were, with one foot in heaven, and the other upon earth. Methinks I hear the melody of heaven, and, by faith, see the angels waiting to carry my soul to the bosom of Jesus, and I shall be forever with the Lord in glory. And who can choose but rejoice in all this?"

"This is heaven begun!" exclaimed Rev. Thomas Scott, when his soul was bursting from its fleshly tabernacle; "I have done with darkness, forever — forever. Satan is vanquished. Nothing now remains but salvation, with eternal glory — eternal glory!"

Said Edmund Auger, just before he expired, "Do you see that blessed assembly who await my arrival? Do you hear that sweet music, with which those holy men invite me, that I may henceforth be a partaker of their happiness? How delightful to be in the society of blessed spirits! Let us go. We must go. Let me go."

The closing scene in the life of Payson was no less rapturous. He said, "The celestial city is full in my view. Its glories beam upon me, its sounds strike upon my ears, and its spirit is breathed into my heart. Nothing separates me from it but the river of death, and this appears but an insignificant rill, that may be crossed by a single step, whenever God shall give permission."

In like manner hundreds have died rejoicing in the dawn of that eternal day of which Christ is the faithful harbinger.

"Thus star by star declines,
Till all are passed away;
As morning high and higher shines,
To pure and perfect day.
Nor sink those stars in empty night,
But hide themselves in heaven's own light."

II.

THE ROSE OF SHARON.

"I am the rose of Sharon."

Hast thou not, in the lone wood's shade,
  Oft seen a lovely flower,
Pale, weak, and bending low its head,
  Drenched by the thunder shower?

Transplanted thence, and trained to grow,
  The sunny garden's pride,
How sweetly did its odors flow,
  Diffused on every side!

Fair Sharon's Rose thus lonely grew,
  In scornéd Galilee,
And fainted 'neath the gory dew
  Of dark Gethsemane. REV. J. EAST.

SHARON was a spacious plain in the East, distinguished for the number and richness of its flowers. Among them the rose was conspicuous for beauty. It was the queen of flowers in the "Bible Lands." Far and near it was known as such; and for this reason it was highly prized. Hence it came to be employed as an appropriate symbol of the Saviour.

At the present time there is more reason for comparing Christ with the rose than with any other flower. All flowers are objects of admiration; but with none are there so many pleasant associations connected, and none appeal to the heart through so many charms. The rose has been celebrated in all lands and ages for this loveliness of which we speak. Hence our ears are frequently greeted with such comparisons as the following. A beautiful object, as a child, is said to be "fair as a rose." Delightful fragrance is pronounced "sweet as a rose." The hue of health upon the cheek of youth is described as "rosy." The blushing morning, with its resplendent glories, is called "rosy dawn." An object distinguished for peculiar softness is spoken of as being "soft as a rose leaf." Any person who will take the trouble to notice his own love for flowers will find that his heart is drawn towards this as it is not towards another. Hence it has always been employed as a decoration at festivals, and a significant emblem on other occasions. Scenes and personal charms that appeal to the tender sensibilities of our nature are frequently described by some allusion to the rose. When the serpent entered the garden of Eden, he is represented by Milton as discovering Eve

> "Veiled in a cloud of fragrance where she stood,
> Half spied, so thick the roses blushing round
> About her glowed."

It seems as if Milton thought that there could not be a perfect Eden without this flower to load the air with its fragrance. Nor was this peculiar to him. We find the same disposition in ourselves to employ it as emblematical of delicate feelings and charming realities. When joyous children, in their loveliness and innocence, assemble on some festive occasion, how generally the wreath of roses is chosen to adorn them! It is suggestive of that class of delightful emotions and sentiments which it is desirable to awaken at such times. Notice this tendency of our hearts when the little child is deposited in the casket for the grave. The rosebud is laid upon its breast. If the death occurs when the season of flowers has passed, the neighborhood is searched for one of these appropriate emblems that has been reared under shelter. And how strongly it appeals to the mourner, as it lies upon that lovely form! That stricken infant was the embodiment of delicate and beautiful elements of life, and nothing could so appropriately symbolize them as a rosebud. How precious to the weeping mother! Who has not seen her advance to the coffin, ere its lid

was fastened, and take the bud from the snowy breast of the child, to preserve as a memento of its existence? Such remembrancers may be found in many a drawer, where they were deposited by bereaved affection after the angel of death swept past.

Such facts are indicative of the place that is assigned to the rose in the world of flowers. They prepare the way to consider what there is about it to remind us of Christ. There must have been some reason for the Saviour's choice of it as a symbol, otherwise he might have compared himself to the *lotus* of Egypt. There must be something that peculiarly adapts it to the object for which it is employed. Let us inquire what it is.

When we look at a rose, the first thing that strikes us is, *the queen of flowers upon the most uncomely stock*. Scarcely any bush is less graceful and promising than that which yields this flower. It is truly without "form" and "comeliness." There is beauty in a well-proportioned tree, even when stripped of its foliage. Many of them, taken in their wildness from the forests, are highly ornamental in the garden. But the rosebush is the reverse of this. It is the last shrub from which a person unacquainted with plants would expect to derive fragrance or beauty. Besides, it repels one

by its thorns. The meanest twig that grows by the road side presents a more attractive surface. For this is a nettle to human hands — no better than the repulsive "bramble" to which the Saviour referred so disparagingly on one occasion. Yet, as we have said, it yields one of the most highly valued of flowers.

This reminds us very forcibly of Christ as he was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah. "He shall grow up as a root out of a dry ground; he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we see him, there is no beauty, that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not." In these words we have presented the humble origin and unattractive appearance of the Messiah. "A root out of dry ground" is a striking figure to indicate this. Barnes, commenting upon these words, says, "The idea here is, that the Messiah would spring from an ancient family decayed, but in whose root, so to speak, there would be life, as there is remaining life in the stump of a tree that has fallen down; but that there would be nothing in his external appearance that would attract attention, or meet the expectations of the nation. Even

then he would not be like a plant of vigorous growth, supplied with abundant rains, and growing in a rich and fertile soil, but he would be like the stinted growth of the sands of the desert."

The Jews were anticipating the reverse of this. They expected a Saviour whose origin would be princely and promising. They were looking for pomp and splendor in his coming. No wonder they were disappointed when he came in his poverty. No wonder they saw nothing in his humble lineage and appearance to admire. Cherishing such views as they did, how could they discover "form" or "comeliness" in him? It is not strange that they exclaimed, when they saw him, "There is no beauty, that we should desire him." Nor is it singular that they "hid their faces from him." They could not believe that such glorious promises as God had made would be fulfilled in such a humble person. They thought it impossible that such fruit could proceed from such a stock — that such a flower as the Rose of Sharon could grow from such a desert soil as Nazareth. Therefore they turned away from him. "He was despised and rejected of men." The very name of "Jesus of Nazareth" became a hissing and by-word among them. That such an unpretending man should claim to have come upon

a divine mission aroused their indignation, and they poured it out.

Now, contrast his advent with the present influence of his gospel. Think of him, born in a manger! Though affluence reared its comfortable abodes and splendid palaces around it, yet there was not a chamber nor a bed for his humble parents. The passing crowd bestowed upon them no attention, because they mingled with the unnoticed poor. Some kind stabler offered them a bed where the cattle ate their provender, as we sometimes permit the way-worn beggar to sleep in our barns. Think of him, then, I say, in the manger; and from thence let your thoughts revert to the cross and the crown — the light of the world and the glory of heaven. Let the Mediator and Advocate with the Father, the eternal Judge, take his place in our minds with the mangered infant. Who would have believed that infant's hand grasped the sceptre of the world? Who would have thought that infant's heart would ever agonize on Calvary for our fallen race? Who would have said that he was destined to convulse the nations with his words, and break down the kingdom of darkness by his power? Yet it was even so. The "root out of a dry ground" produced the queen of flowers.

There could not be a more striking contrast than that presented by the birth and present exaltation of Christ. We have examples, in profane history, of men rising from obscurity to distinction; and they are recounted as wonderful. There was Martin Luther, the son of a miner, without early advantages or encouragement, ascending to a post of influence and distinction seldom, if ever, surpassed. All Christendom bears the impress of his deeds. There was also Melancthon, the son of an artisan, throwing off the incubus which a lowly life imposed upon him, and rising to become the friend and co-helper of Luther in the moral revolution of the old world. There are others, too, of whom the earth was not worthy, whose examples are cited as remarkable for the contrast presented between their humble origin and the final position of power for good which they occupied. But all these fall infinitely below that which we see in Christ. Admirable as they are, they are of little importance beside the example of Him who went from a stable to the throne of the "King of kings and Lord of lords."

Look more particularly at the *mission* which the son of unknown Mary performed. I need not describe it; I could not if I would. We sometimes contrast the labors of individuals in this world, in

order to have a more correct idea of the character of their offices. With this object in view, contrast the mission of the soldier, waging a war of aggression, with that of the missionary of the cross, bearing the word of life to the perishing. The former goes with deadly weapons and unloving heart to cut down his fellow-men as the mower cuts the grass. Under the power of martial music, his soul becomes the abode of burning passions, so that his highest ambition is the winning of an empire, though it be done at the sacrifice of a whole army of men. To lay smiling villages and cities in smouldering ruins, to slaughter his enemies and multiply misery in its most revolting forms, is his peculiar work. But the herald of the cross goes with the blessings of salvation to the same people. He wears no armor but the "armor of God." He takes no shield but the "shield of faith," and no helmet but "the helmet of salvation." He wields no sword but "the sword of the Spirit," and goes "praying always with all prayer and supplication" that he may "save some." His mission is one of love — "good will to men." He carries glad tidings to their doors. He helps them to build, and not to waste their towns and cities. He lifts them from their degradation with a brother's heart. He leads them to the wells of

salvation. He points them to the Victim on the cross. He tells them of the Saviour's dying love. He guides them to the "fountain filled with blood." They become new creatures in Christ. Their hearts and homes are better. Their land improves. Institutions of learning and religion rise to bless them. They soon take their stand beside the Christian nations of the earth.

Now, which of these two missions is characterized by the most dignity and true glory? That of the missionary of Jesus is far, far higher than that of the warrior. All the moral sentiments of our nature record their verdict for the bearer of glad tidings. In comparison with his, the work of the soldier, contending for empire and renown, is contemptible and low.

But how much more exalted was the mission of Christ than even that of the most devoted herald of salvation! How much more love and self-denial it required! How much broader and grander was the field which it explored! Our feeble conceptions are inadequate to embrace the height and depth, the length and breadth, of the plan devised for the salvation of the race. Yet it was all the work of that unpromising babe in the manger of Bethlehem.

Another quality of the rose which entitles it to become a symbol of Christ is its *fragrance.* For this it has always been celebrated. Its perfume, too, is more delightful than that of most flowers. In this particular it excels the multitude of buds and blossoms that adorn the earth.

The perfume of flowers has ever been employed as an emblem of the pure and sanctifying influence of holy character. A popular writer, in a recent work which he published, speaking of the characters of those followers of Jesus who maintain a heavenly walk, says, "Their whole walk is fragrant with paradise." It is an apt figure to denote what is very agreeable to us in the amiable piety of another. A poet has expressed the same sentiment in the following lines: —

"When one that holds communion with the skies
Has filled his urn where these pure waters rise,
And once more mingles with us meaner things,
'Tis e'en as if an angel shook his wings.
Immortal fragrance fills the circuit wide,
That tells us whence his treasures are supplied.
So when a ship, well freighted with the stores
The sun matures on India's spicy shores,
Has dropped her anchor and her canvas furled
In some fair haven of our western world,
'Twere vain inquiry to what port she went;
The gale informs us, laden with the scent."

There is more significance in this part of the symbol, perhaps, than we have supposed. Under the Jewish system of sacrifices we find that the fragrance of the offerings was of considerable importance, at least as an emblem. Hence we frequently read of sacrifices, that they were a "sweet savor unto God." When Noah built an altar to the Lord, and offered burnt offerings upon it, God is said to have "smelled a sweet savor." That is, it was to him a pleasing and acceptable expression of Noah's faith and gratitude. All through the Jewish dispensation such observances are described by language like this: "It is a sweet savor, an offering made by fire unto the Lord." In these sacrifices there was a pointing to that greater offering upon the cross; for which reason, probably, they were specially acceptable to God. Paul speaks of that affecting scene on Calvary in these words: "Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God *for a sweet-smelling savor*." From these allusions it appears that there was a marked connection between the Jewish sacrifices and that on the cross, in the particular named.

The apostle refers to the influence of Christians by employing the same figure. He says, "We are

unto God a sweet savor of Christ." That is, the faithful believer sheds abroad an influence that is delightful as sweet odors to God. Nor is it his own righteousness — it is the "sweet savor of Christ." He scatters the perfume of the Saviour's holiness.

If the influence of virtue and holiness, as developed in a mere human character, can be aptly compared to delicious odors, then Christ has preëminent claim to the title Rose of Sharon. That flower was highly distinguished for its fragrance; and so was Christ for the perfection of his virtues. He filled the atmosphere around him with the savor of his holy presence. Hence, when David spoke of him, in one of his touching psalms, he referred to his righteous character under the following figure: "All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palace, whereby they have made thee glad." Imagine a royal personage coming forth from an "ivory palace," where his robes have become impregnated with the most delicious odors that are known, the breezes catching the perfume, and flooding the air with its regaling sweetness — and you have a correct idea of the Psalmist's figure, to exhibit the sacred influence that continually emanates from Christ.

The influence of his gospel in regenerating the

guilty world is spoken of in language like the following: "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, *and blossom as the rose.*" What could more forcibly express the vast change which Christianity is bringing to pass in heathen lands, than this picture of *a wilderness blossoming as the rose?* Imagine a desolate waste of sand, without a green thing to gladden the eye upon the whole area of sterility, — and then conceive of it as being suddenly converted into a garden of blooming roses, extending far as the vision can reach, one unbroken plain of beauty, — and you have the scriptural representation of the elevating influence of Christianity upon the world.

But the third and principal quality of Sharon's rose, which made it specially appropriate for the use to which Christ devoted it, is *Beauty.* Doubtless the symbol was originally designed to express the "beauty of holiness," as it appeared in Christ. It might have been employed wholly for this object. Be that as it may, it is a choice emblem of this exhibition of the Saviour's character.

Beauty, wherever it is beheld, charms the eye. Men may differ in their views respecting what constitutes it; but whenever an individual discovers that to which he gives this appellation, it sways his

heart. God evidently designed that it should fulfil an important mission, otherwise he would have scattered it less profusely. In whatever direction we turn our eyes, we behold the beautiful in the works of God. From the humblest flower to the grandest object in nature, this quality appears. Blot out this single characteristic of the world in which we live, and much of the charm that it has for us would be gone. Nor is it confined to material objects alone; it attaches to the relations and laws of domestic and social life. There is beauty in the fitness and delicacy of these, as really as there is in a flower, or in the human countenance. I say, therefore, God must have appointed this to accomplish an important purpose. No one can contemplate the great profusion of flowers, even, which are the most beautiful of material objects, without being impressed with this idea. If loveliness has no special purpose, then we behold something on every hill and in every valley, by every stream and on every plain, as well as in every land, which God has created in vain. But such a thought is an imputation upon the divine character. Beauty is no vain creation. It leaves an impression upon the heart of man. It makes the mark of God wherever it exists.

But the symbol in question refers to *moral* beauty. Christ employs the fairest flower to symbolize the highest moral perfection. Beauty is very frequently employed in the Scriptures to express exalted Christian excellence. Thus we are instructed to "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." The same writer said he would enter the sanctuary "to behold the beauty of the Lord;" that is, to witness those manifestations of his perfections which acceptable worship promises. He also calls Zion "the perfection of beauty." Nothing is so exquisitely fair as that purity which belongs to the true Zion. Hence her subjects are exhorted to "put on their beautiful garments;" while the Lord is said to "beautify them with salvation." He clothes them in the robes of his righteousness, that they may shine to his praise. For this David prayed when he said, "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us."

We need not multiply quotations. Such passages are numerous, and they possess an unmistakable meaning. The truth which they convey meets with a response in our hearts. There is nothing more beautiful than moral purity. Let nature endow a person with all the charms that ever graced humanity — the moment we learn that a corrupt

heart lies behind those fascinating features, he or she is no longer beautiful. That quality has faded like a flower in the blasts of November. It is because our moral instincts assert that the highest style of beauty is the moral. We cannot think that a corrupt individual is adorned with this grace; or, at least, we have very little admiration to bestow upon his or her attractions. On the other hand, we often see personal charms in the plainest individuals, simply because we know that goodness fills the heart. The cardinal virtues throw the radiance of their purity into the speaking countenance and self-denying acts.

A person performs a deed that appears to be the promptings of a benevolent heart, such as clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, or raising up the down-trodden. We admire the act, and join with others in pronouncing it beautiful. But let us ascertain that some sinister motive, some sly, secret, selfish interest begot it, and at once it is converted into a contemptible deed. It is degraded from a lovely to a hateful thing. We have no patience with it. Its charm has vanished.

Such an act as that of the poor widow, casting her two mites into the Lord's treasury, possesses a moral attraction before which much that is called

great in the world is vanity. The spirit that actuated the pious woman is one that commands the respect of every class. The untutored savage, even, feels his heart melt under its moral power. The roughest nature cannot so insult itself as to assert that a rose is not lovely; neither can it assert the same of that widow's act without doing violence to itself. The gift of a fortune, the endowment of a college or asylum, for worldly power and glory, is small and insignificant in the comparison.

From this it is evident that moral beauty is the highest kind. The virtues that lift the soul heavenward awaken the most pleasing emotions within us. The chains of Peter, when we learn the spirit which impelled him to preach of Christ, become radiant with this quality. Every link is one of gold, and all together shine as jasper. There is more attraction in those galling fetters than attaches to the gilded robes of a royal despot.

Notice here the true nature of sin and holiness as presented in the Scriptures. The former is the embodiment of moral deformity, the most ugly and unlovely of all existences. Behold the emblem of it in the Bible. It is the most loathsome and terrific of all creeping things — the serpent. In its nature and destructive power, sin is like that dreadful creature.

It has a fang to bite, poison to infuse, and death to inflict. On the other hand, as we have seen, holiness is described as loveliness itself. The most lovely objects in nature are selected to set forth its attractions. Just those things which command the profoundest love of the human heart are chosen to symbolize it. All this adds weight to what has been said concerning moral beauty.

How aptly, then, is Christ styled the Rose of Sharon! When Isaiah was describing the future blessings of the righteous, he did not forget Christ. He said, "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty." And, O, how beautiful! The rose leaf is less pure than his soul. The dove is the divine emblem of his lovely spirit. Sin has not left the trace of a single passion upon his brow. There was moral beauty in his advent. It was a glorious sight when the angels flashed the light of their wings upon the midnight gloom to celebrate his birth. His youth lost not the charm. Youth is always winning when it is found in the ways of virtue; but that of Christ was rendered infinitely more so in consequence of its connection with the issues of his manhood. His ministry, with its deeds of unrivalled benevolence, was beautiful. Infidels have been compelled to acknowledge this. When he took little children in

his arms to bless them; when he wept with the sorrowing, and rejoiced with the joyful; and when every where he laid his hand of love, and poured out his heart of mercy upon the suffering forms of humanity, his character was lovely beyond comparison. Behold him in the Mount of Olives at night, supplicating the blessing of God upon his foes! So beautiful was the scene, that artists have transferred the affecting reality to the canvas. Follow him to the judgment hall of Pilate. Listen to the accusations that are brought, and say if they tarnish the lustre of his character. The longer we gaze upon that interview, the more is our admiration of the Saviour increased. His holiness becomes more attractive as bitter enemies attempt to despoil it. What can be more lovely than the disposition which prompted his last prayer for his persecutors when upon the cross; "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do." This was the climax of those beautiful things which characterized the Saviour from his birth to his death. Surely the queen of flowers is fitly chosen to represent his worth.

In one respect Christ is not like the rose of Sharon. *Its* beauty fades with the passing season. It withers, and lies a worthless thing. But that of Christ, like all moral and spiritual existences, never

decays. When the last trace of loveliness shall have passed away from the earth, that of Jesus will shine with more charms than ever. His presence will beautify the mansions of rest, and ransomed spirits will bow before him as the object of their hearts' deepest love and reverence.

If Christ is the most beautiful of all moral beings, then we readily perceive how we can attain to the highest degree of loveliness. We must be like him. Thousands aim to secure the admiration of mankind. Indeed, it is more or less the effort of all the race. Personal appearance commands their undivided attention. They employ art and ingenuity to heighten their charms. Gems, and all sorts of costly trinkets, with princely garments and studied airs, are employed for this purpose. It would startle the world to know exactly the amount of time and expense devoted to this single object, by the human family. Yet, it is done for a vain, perishing impression, while they might possess a personal attraction like that of Christ. They have only to be like him in moral excellence, and they will be adorned with his graces. Their influence will be like the perfume of flowers, and their moral beauty ineradicable as the nature of holiness.

III.

THE SINNER'S FRIEND.

"There is a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother."

How much to be prized and esteem'd is a friend
On whom we can always with safety depend!
Our joys, when extended, will always increase;
And griefs, when divided, are hushed into peace.

MRS. SMITH.

Christ is a Friend, whose love is pure,
And sheds immortal bloom;
Its fragrance will through time endure,
And live beyond the tomb.

MRS. BAXTER.

THERE is scarcely a word in the English language more precious than that of FRIEND. It is suggestive of much that is pleasant and joyous in social intercourse, and tells of love and solace when the heart was made sad by trial. A FRIEND! How lone and desolate would be the condition of a person without this boon! Who would be willing to try the experiment of living without the fellowship of such a wayfarer? To go, friendless, into the walks of life; to share, friendless, its numerous joys;

to meet, friendless, its inevitable sorrows, — who would dare make the trial? It is human to desire companionship along the devious paths of life. It is human to want a hand that we can cordially grasp. It is human to seek a heart that will love like our own. Without this source of happiness, the present is a burden and the future a terror.

In all ages and climes, by all classes and sects, friendship has been sought and honored. Our social organizations, our literature, and our religion, all proclaim its worth and power. No person is supposed to be sick of its enjoyment unless he is afflicted with some mental aberration, as the misanthrope or hermit. Poets have invariably invested it with a charm to all persons, except such as fail to appreciate the relations and duties of life. Thus Goldsmith represents the "Hermit" as saying, —

> "And what is friendship but a name,
> A charm that lulls to sleep,
> A shade that follows wealth or fame,
> And leaves the wretch to weep?"

Such is the sentiment of those only who have either been cheated and disappointed by the pledges of a *false* friendship, or who are unworthy to share the love and esteem of their fellow-men. The lov-

ing, noble soul adopts the utterance of another poet, and says, —

"For a friend is above gold, precious as the stores of the mind."

The Saviour himself recognized the value of the relation expressed by the word Friend, when he applied the appellation to his disciples. This act of friendship on his part must have been very dear to his followers at that time. To be welcomed as friends by such a personage, and to be privileged to call him by the same title, is no small immunity to a sinful mortal. When St. John wished to appeal tenderly to believers, so as to awaken in their hearts a response worthy of their high vocation, he caught this expressive word from the lips of his Master, and said, "*I have called you friends.*" This was professing strong attachment and decided confidence in those who were addressed, and it must have resulted in mutual trust and esteem.

But there is a relation of life in which earthly friends can render no assistance or solace. As heirs of immortality we have interests to be cared for, and a destiny to be determined, in regard to which human sympathy and love are powerless. The social ties of life are only temporary. The

most endearing relation is subject to change and sudden termination. There is no certainty about any of the possessions and enjoyments of this world. They are fickle and transitory. The wisest counsellor, the dearest friend, may lie low in death to-morrow. Our grateful intimacies, and sources of mutual help and joy, may be thus suddenly broken. Besides, were these earthly bonds perpetual, we need more than a human friend in our highest spiritual interests. As immortal and accountable beings, destined to reign with God in glory, or suffer with the wicked in perdition forever and ever, we need a DIVINE sympathizer, a Friend who can "be touched with the feeling of our infirmities," and who has been "in all points tempted like as we are." Such a Friend is indispensable, and he who has him not must be lonely and wretched indeed when the death-hour comes.

Thanks to infinite wisdom and love, such a Friend is provided in our Lord Jesus Christ — one "*that sticketh closer than a brother.*" He possesses every attribute to qualify him for this office. Thousands are ready to testify from experience to his merits. They have tried his counsels, sympathy, and grace. He has been with them in joy and trial, in high places and low places, at home and abroad, living

and dying. The longer the trial of his friendship has been made, the more satisfactory has it proved. The more closely men have walked with him, the more delightful have they found his fellowship. Even the poor sinner, vile as the thief on the cross, has been welcomed at the moment of repentance by this heavenly Friend. His praise is in all the churches, and millions of harps are strung in paradise to swell it.

The following are some of his attributes.

He is a sympathizing friend.

Even true friends do not always possess this essential quality. I say *essential*, because in a world like this, where joy and sorrow, hope and disappointment, mingle so strangely, an unsympathizing friend is a poor companion. For some hours and conditions he may be well fitted, but for those checkered scenes that make up so much of life, he is totally unprepared. His experience may not have been of such character as to prepare him to sympathize with persons in a multitude of circumstances. Our experience must be kindred to that of our friends if we would fully sympathize with them. This is the secret of being able to *rejoice with them that rejoice and to weep with them that weep.* There is no school so thorough and moulding in its in-

fluence as that of experience. It impresses upon our hearts lessons which are powerless as taught by books and human lips. What does the millionaire know of the feelings and trials of the poor man in the struggle of life? How can the king on his throne appreciate the hard lot of his suffering subjects? Who is quite prepared to mingle in the afflicted family group unless he himself has been bereaved? There is the wandering exile, driven from his home and kindred for serving Christ — who can enter into the feelings of his heart so fully as a brother exile? There is the child of misfortune, whose large possessions have taken to themselves wings in an evil hour — who understands his disappointment but he who has alike fallen from affluence to poverty? There is the weeping mother, whose lovely infant is torn from her arms by death — who but some other sorrowing mother can know how great is her anguish? Indeed, this principle extends even to the pursuits of life. None but a sailor can sympathize with those "whose home is on the sea," in their perils and hardships. None but a teacher can feel with a teacher, none but a pastor with a pastor; and so on through all the avocations of life. Hence it is well nigh impossible for us to sympathize with our friends in all things. For the experience of no two persons is exactly alike.

Moreover, we are often disqualified to sympathize with those around us in consequence of forgetting what were our exact feelings in certain circumstances, and at certain times. There can be but little doubt that parents err in the government of their children, by not remembering how they felt and acted when they were young. They are incapacitated thereby for appreciating the trials of children. Children have trials peculiar to themselves, and all of us can recall them by a sober, second thought. And it is only when they are remembered that we can so appreciate their circumstances as to control and guide them with success. A distinguished teacher says upon this point, "It is unquestionably true, and every wise teacher is fully aware of it, that in school discipline there is constant danger that the teacher will estimate erroneously the moral character of the actions he witnesses, just because he has forgotten the feelings of childhood. He cannot appreciate its temptations or understand its difficulties, and many a little struggler with the inclinations which would draw him from duty, is chilled and discouraged in his efforts, because the teacher never knows that he is making an effort to do his duty, or at least never understands the trials and difficulties that he finds in his way." This

remark is just as applicable to adults generally as it is to teachers.

It is also impossible to sympathize with many of our fellow-men in their peculiar temptations. Nothing is more common than to find ourselves condemning the misdeeds of others, when perhaps we should be guilty of the same offences if subjected to the same temptations. Individuals are subjected to influences in early life, often, that warp and distort their characters. Their vile passions are fearfully developed by exposure to corrupt example, so that they are really trained to become the victims of dreadful vices. That early education, in a multitude of instances, weakens the power of moral resistance, and consequently renders the unfortunate child a more easy prey to vice, cannot be doubted for a moment. Furthermore, some inherit moral weaknesses and obliquities, and this renders their relations to evil still more precarious. *The iniquity of the fathers is visited upon their children even to the third and fourth generation.* The fathers sin, and the children suffer. The former hug some loathsome vice, and their offspring are, in consequence, peculiarly tempted in that direction. These, and a thousand kindred circumstances, are not, and cannot be fully appreciated by men, so as to duly pro-

portion their sympathies. No one can deny that less guilt attaches to a person whose early education was demoralizing, in the commission of certain crimes, than to one who perpetrates them against the best early impressions and discipline. Still this is generally overlooked, and often it must be so of necessity.

But it is far otherwise with Christ in all the foregoing particulars. None of these infirmities mar his character as a sympathizing Friend. He knows the very springs of human action. His experience from the manger to the cross was checkered, disciplinary, and instructive. His mission as a preacher was preceded by THIRTY YEARS of human experience; and it was all indispensable. Not a day nor an hour of that thirty years was unnecessary. Every part of it developed the tender sensibilities of his sinless nature. The scenes, too, with which it was checkered were exactly suited to prepare him to sympathize with men. Behold him at the grave of lamented Lazarus! He is a weeper there with the sisters, Martha and Mary. How deep and sincere his sorrow! He knew the bitterness of the cup mingled by Providence for them. Hear his words of consolation — "*Thy brother shall live again.*" Blest words to fall upon bleeding

hearts! O, how very dear the fellowship of Christ, in that hour of grief, to the sisters of Bethany! Yes! The Saviour was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," that he might be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." He mingled with men in all the conditions of life, from the king on the throne to the beggar at the gate. He sought especially the poor and suffering, to lift them up and bless them. He saw the rich man in his palace, and the poor man in his hovel. He saw the ruler in his royal robes, and the subject in his cringing servitude. He took the little child in his arms, as if to hint to mothers that he would bear it in his bosom hereafter, and pitied the old man on the verge of the grave. The persecuted, the bereaved, the fatherless, the widow, the lame, the maimed, the halt, the blind — all shared in the kindnesses of his great heart. He understood their trials and their wants, and nothing in their experience was hid from his eyes. In short, he experienced every form of trial, suffering, and temptation, which falls to the lot of mortals; and hence he is abundantly qualified to sympathize with them. Bunyan alludes indirectly to this truth in the first two lines of the following verse: —

"Christ leads me through no darker rooms
Than he went through before;
He that into God's kingdom comes
Must enter by that door."

No infirmity of recollection diminishes the sympathy of Christ. Unlike man, he commands every item of his earthly experience, fresh as if it were of yesterday's occurrence. He was once a *child*, and forgets not the feelings and trials of childhood. He expects no more of the young than they are able to perform, and imposes no more upon them than they are able to bear. It is a pleasant thought for the young to ponder, that the Saviour was once young like themselves, a member of the family, a learner, an associate. They may be five, ten, twelve, fifteen years of age, — the Saviour was once a child, a lad, of the same age, and knows to-day what were the exact feelings and temptations of that early period. Their parents, guardians, and teachers may err in their commands and reproofs, because they have forgotten the experience of early life, but Christ never.

Nor will he fail to appreciate the temptations of men, since he was "*tempted in all points like as we are.*" Had he sojourned in the flesh without meeting the assaults of the arch-fiend, how poorly qualified would he have been to sympathize with us! For tempta-

tions make up a great portion of life. They come from every quarter, and even meet us in sacred places. Gabriel could not appreciate our wants and frailties in this respect, for he has not been a mark for the fiery darts of the enemy. But Christ understands the nature, number, and power of temptations. He sees where to exercise forbearance in consequence of evil early training or inherited propensities. His judgments in this regard are strict, but not unjustly severe. They are merciful, but not too lenient.

Such is the Saviour as a sympathizing Friend. Fancy could not paint one better suited to the wants of probationers in this "veil of tears."

He is a long-suffering Friend.

Earthly friends weary with our drafts upon their attention and aid. We hesitate to make repeated requests for their assistance, lest they be wearied, like the "unjust judge," by our "continual coming." The most tried friend will not endure appeals beyond measure. There is a limit to his attentions and favors. Even members of the same family — parents and children, brothers and sisters — are not disposed to tax each other unduly, for the reason named. Unkind feelings and words, that mar the harmony of the domestic circle, are sometimes the result of such indiscreet conduct.

Moreover, what would be thought of the man who should consider a valuable gift from a friend an excuse or reason for asking another of him, of equal or greater worth? It would be considered a breach of friendship, and, as Jeremy Taylor said, would "burn the thread that ties their hearts together." No person would venture to conduct upon such a principle in his intercourse with men. He would not dare risk his reputation in this way, nor sacrifice the kind feelings of acquaintances in this reckless manner.

So settled have mankind been in their views upon this subject, that marked departures from this principle of action have been made records of history. Thus it is related of Alexander the Great, that, on one occasion, he directed the philosopher Anaxarchus to go to his treasurer and ask for any gift he pleased. The treasurer refused to grant his request, because it was so great, until he might see the prince. Accordingly he went to him and said "it seemed too much for one man to receive." The great sovereign replied, "It is not too much for Alexander to give. *He does honor to my liberality* by so large a request." That even a prince, with immense wealth, should grant a request so exorbitant surprised the treasurer. The mass of men

would have considered such asking a good reason for immediate repulse. It is so unlike the common principle upon which men conduct, that the historian has made it an item in public annals.

But Christ is not a Friend who is wearied by our importunities. He never thinks that we ask too much, nor that we appeal too often for his aid. The more frequently we apply to him for sympathy and help, the more cheerfully does he grant our prayer. The more we ask, the more is he willing to give. He tells us that it "does honor to his liberality" to ask much at his hands, and that it affords an opportunity for the display of his patience when our supplications are "continual." We can pour our wants into his ear at any time, and ask for any necessary blessing, without fear of cooling his love or diminishing his friendship. Indeed, it is the only way to preserve unbroken mutual attachment between him and ourselves. Multitudes have tried and proved it, and are now ready to bear witness to the encouraging fact. He regards this desire for his aid as evidence of dependent feelings, and this unceasing importunity an expression of confidence in his love and mercy.

Long-suffering Saviour! Ages since would thy dependent children have wearied thee, hadst thou

been like them impatient! But thou, Immanuel, dost never tire, though they call day and night upon thee! Happy they!

He is a faithful Friend.

A faithful friend is one who will tell us of our faults. Not all sympathizing and long-suffering friends will do this. It is one of the severest tests of fidelity to go and tell a bosom companion of his errors. It is an easy matter, judging from observation, to proclaim his errors abroad. It costs little self-denial to whisper them in the ears of those who ought not to be informed of them. Another has said, "It is easy enough to get more or less than the truth regarding our failings, and friends often fret and spoil each other by a mutual retail of compliments and scandal, which they make a business of collecting, to be used in congratulation or condolement. What is better, in view of such tale bearing, than a sincere counsellor, who at due times will tell the simple and entire truth, and, above flattery and calumny, will give honest advice upon faults of character and errors of conduct, mingling kindness with caution, and never so encouraging as when thoroughly frank? This is a nice point, and one full of difficulties; yet the point is a main one, and a brave, generous heart need not fear the diffi-

culties. No man is a true friend who is not ready to be a faithful adviser, willing to wound self-love in its tenderest part, and give passing pain for the sake of lasting blessing. Not often, and never with any assumption, must he do this, but humbly, as before the Searcher of hearts, and in view of the benign and majestic Being who washed his disciples' feet before telling them of their defects, and opening to them the fulness of his wisdom and love."

Christ is faithful as he is sympathizing. When he was on earth, and fellowshipped with his disciples, he did not suffer their sins to go unrebuked. It was his chief concern that they should become patterns of Christian propriety; and hence he told them plainly of their faults. In this he was equally the "Friend of sinners;" for he was pointed and pungent when he dealt with them. In hell the Scribes and Pharisees will remember forever with what fidelity he rebuked their sins, and warned them to flee from "the wrath to come." His decisive conduct towards them was the occasion of anger and wounded feelings often; but it was none the less admirable for that. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend" is a divine proverb. The whole beauty of it, however, is not perceived until we consider its counterpart — "But the kisses of an enemy

are deceitful." The Saviour had an experience at this point over which his children have often wondered. The kiss of Judas, the apostate, went like a dagger to his heart. It was the forerunner of indescribable agonies and an ignominious death. True friendship recognizes this mark of fidelity; it is anxious to have faults pointed out, and thankful to those who undertake the self-denying task. The devoted Martyn said of a person who exposed his defects, even in a rash and unkind manner, "I was thankful to God for admonishing me, and my gratitude to the man was, I think, unfeigned." And in his private journal the name of the reprover was found specially remembered in prayer. The commentator who records this fact about Martyn says, "I am a poor, straying sinner, with a wayward will and a blinded heart, going wrong at every step. The friend for my case is one who will watch over me with *open rebuke*, (not always public, but with a free and *open* heart;) a reprover when needful, not a flatterer. The genuineness of friendship without this mark is more than doubtful; its usefulness utterly paralyzed. The *secret love* that will not risk a *faithful wound*, and spares rebuke rather than inflict pain, judged by God's standard, is hatred.*

* Lev. xix. 17.

Far better the wound should be probed than covered. Rebuke, kindly, considerately, and prayerfully administered, cements friendship, rather than loosens it. The contrary instances only prove that the union has never been based upon substantial principle."

Such was ever the fidelity of Christ, and it was always *kindly* exercised. The good that might be accomplished among friends by proper reproof is often defeated by the manner of expressing it. Many have not the courage to administer it until their ire is somewhat aroused; and then they proceed to the duty with any spirit but that of true kindness. Not so with our Saviour. He was extremely severe occasionally to gross sinners, but ever gentle and kind when he rebuked his disciples. When Peter denied him at the time his trial was progressing, the Saviour only cast a *look* upon him; but it was doubtless a look of grieved affection. When he was about to reprove certain of his followers for want of humility and charity, he prefaced the rebuke by washing their feet. When Thomas was so strangely unbelieving, how tenderly did Christ censure his lack of faith, and bring him back to duty! And when he was the guest of Martha and Mary, in their humble home, how kindly he

exposed the undue regard of the former for the things of the world! The most sensitive persons could not object to such tender treatment. Kindness and fidelity happily blended!

He is a constant Friend.

In our social relations we are continually reminded that friendship is, like other things, uncertain. Men are fickle as the wind, and very trifling incidents often change their views of character. One of the dark scenes that mar human intercourse is that of friends speedily changed to enemies. Every neighborhood can furnish one or more of these scenes, with such antecedents and consequents as depend upon circumstances. It is no strange thing for friends who love to-day to hate to-morrow; and very frequently the strongest friends become the bitterest foes. It has been said, and with much truth, that the most burning hate exists between those who become foes in the same household. Family quarrels are usually earnest and marked.

But it is of the fickleness of human friendship that I would speak. There are a great many contingencies in the present state of society upon which it depends. There are so many factitious distinctions under the present social organization, that friendship becomes almost wholly one of the

incidentals. The rich man has many friends. That it is the fruit of his riches, in many instances, appears from the fact that when his wealth is gone, his friends go in about the same ratio. Of course such friendship is like the money it worships; it "makes to itself wings, and flies away." As much may be said of the honored and powerful. To be accounted the friends of such famous characters is the highest ambition of thousands. But take away their honor and power, and the crowd of worshippers disperses. The friends that are left are few and far between; but these few are choice ones; for a true "friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity."

The above is no sketch of fancy; it is what opens to our observation, if it be not actually proved in our own experience. The friendly relations of life are subject to change, and even sudden rupture; but the friendship that may be created between the Saviour and ourselves is not subject to change, at least on his part. He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." Social distinctions do not make or mar his love. He passes by the palace of royalty, and enters the humble cottage, if there be a foe in the former and a friend in the latter. The ardor of his attachment is never cooled by the sight of

rags, nor the absence of popular favor. There is nought in these signals of adversity to forestall his friendly feelings. Therefore, he is the same tried and true friend through all changes and trials—the same in time and eternity.

> "We, alas! forget too often
> What a Friend we have above."

He is a loving Friend.

Even true friends are characterized by different degrees of affection. But the highest development of friendship is based upon the highest exercise of love. The constancy and fidelity of friendship are marked or not, according to the strength of affection that subsists between the parties. The truest friendship grows out of the truest love.

What, then, shall we think of Christ as a Friend? Who ever loved as he loves?

> "His is love beyond a brother's,
> Costly, free, and knows no end."

Yes; no brother ever exhibited, in living acts, greater love for his brother than Christ exhibited for his foes. He gave his life a ransom for them! "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." "Greater love hath

no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die." Here imagination falters, and language fails in conceiving of and describing the love of Christ. We have read of patriots laying down their lives upon the tented field for a land, home, and friends they loved; but we have not read or heard of one who has bled and died for his enemies — not one. There was some personal enjoyment at stake, some portion of selfishness, in all these examples of patriotic devotion. These deeds were not performed for the benefit of universal man. In their widest scope they embraced but a single country, and a small portion of the common brotherhood. But Christ died for the guilty WORLD. The country that gave him a manger for his cradle, and the cross for his crown, comprehended but a speck of the aggregate humanity for which he died. His boundless love, like the sun in his circuit, encircles the habitable globe. It leaves not out the meanest beggar nor the youngest babe.

Our love for man is modified often by his personal attractions or deformities. We are so constituted that beauty, whether in nature or art, charms us. The rose, the lily, the green lawn, the sunrise

and sunset, the timid dove, the gentle lamb, the gurgling brook, the painted landscape, the polished bust, the innocent child, the graceful form, the flashing eye, the ruddy cheek, all hold us by their beauties. But the Saviour's love is inspired only by *moral* beauty — the holiness of the heart. These outward attractions are to him but the dress of the soul, worthless when the soul returns to God who gave it. The beauty which the world admires will fade. *Like a flower of the field it is cut down and withereth.* But the beauty which calls forth the love of Christ is eternal. It lives when the body returns to dust, and the "elements melt with fervent heat." We may well adopt the sentiment of the poet: —

"Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made,
Were every reed on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade,
To write the love of Christ our Lord
Would drain the ocean dry,
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky."

He is a forgiving Friend.

Should we treat the best earthly friend as we have treated Christ, it would scarcely be possible for him to "forgive and forget." Such indifference

to his sacrifices for our good, yea, such cold neglect, would cause him to turn away from us with contempt. He would spurn us from his presence, as being too ungrateful to be forgiven. This unforgiving spirit is rife in our social relations. Even the most trivial inattention or slight begets animosities that rankle in the heart for months and years. What, then, would be said of the man who should treat with disrespect the memory of one who lost his life in protecting him? He would be an object of contempt in every circle; and no endowments or smiles of fortune could atone for such base ingratitude.

But all this, and more, has been done to Christ. Think of all he suffered in the flesh, of all that he said and did, of his crucifixion and death; and then look at the unfeeling conduct of men towards him. See how they have slighted his offers of mercy, and refused to love and serve him. Behold them nailing him to the cross again, and opening afresh his bleeding wounds. And yet he promises forgiveness. He prays for these crucifiers, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do." To vilest sinners he says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek

and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." No father could more gladly welcome his returning prodigal son than Christ receives the repenting sinner. It is his nature to forgive; "and, forgiving, he is blest."

He is an everlasting Friend.

We have said that ties of earthly friendship are rudely sundered by death; that the truest earthly friend may be removed when his presence and sympathy are most grateful. Life has too many illustrations of this fact to make additional proof necessary.

"There is no flock, however watched and tended,
But one dead lamb is there;
There is no fireside, howsoe'er defended,
But has a vacant chair."

But the Saviour never leaves nor forsakes his friends. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." On sea and land, at home or far away, he is still at our side. And more; when the heavens roll together as a scroll, "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught

up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Glorious consummation of a friendship begun on earth! The union made perfect where there is "no more pain, and all tears are wiped from the eyes"!

Christian! be not content simply with finding such a Friend. *Strive to be like him.* How often do intimate companions become like each other! Close familiarity, and mutual love and confidence, bring them to feel and act almost as one. They become assimilated to each other in thought, sentiment, and aim. Let this power of assimilation be realized in your communion with Christ. Cultivate such a close fellowship with him that you will breathe his heavenly spirit, and maintain his simplicity and purity of character. Live so near to him, be so often with him, that the world may regard you his friend. In this way your influence will tell upon the world, nor die when you are dead.

Sinner! without Christ you are friendless indeed. You may succeed in your worldly plans, and enjoy life with a merry heart; but the time is coming when you will need the sympathy and grace of this "divine Friend." That time is coming, too, on rapid wing, and it soon will be here. Business,

pleasure, hope, nothing can stay its approach, for come it must. And then who but Christ can appreciate your dying agonies? Kindred and friends may gaze into your distorted countenance, but they have never experienced these death pangs, and so they can form no just conception of your "mortal agony." But Christ has been there before you. He grappled with the king of terrors. He knows his power, and has felt his fiery darts. He has led the way down through the dark valley, that he might lead others through to "Canaan's shore." Make him your FRIEND; and you will be able to say, when you leave the world, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

IV.

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

"I am the light of the world."

How long, how far on pilgrimage
To Zion have I feigned to go,
Yet went astray at every stage,
Snared or smit down by every foe.

Thou LIGHT, that lightenest every one
Who toils through this bewildering path,
Shine on my soul, that I may shun
The broad, dark, downward road to wrath.

MONTGOMERY.

The Saviour was wont to retire to the Mount of Olives at night for prayer. From that sacred retreat he returned early one morning to the temple in Jerusalem, having spent the whole night in that retired spot. The rising sun was just illuminating the spires and turrets of the city, and irradiating hill and forest with its golden splendor. The streets were beginning to swarm with busy people, entering upon their daily toil. Intent upon his mission of love, Jesus sought the temple, whither the multitude

repaired to hear his gracious words. It was here, probably, in allusion to the rising sun, whose beams had scattered the darkness of the previous night, that he said, "I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD." His meaning could not have been obscure to those eager listeners. The humble bearing of the speaker was sufficient to assure them that his words were not those of vain boasting. Bold pretension could not sit with so much grace upon human character.

Light is frequently employed as a symbol in the Bible. A few illustrations may serve to elucidate the subject. The progress of religion in the soul is described thus: "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." This comparison is apt and beautiful. The first indication of approaching light is the appearance of the day star. Then the faint, lovely dawn breaks over the distant hills, gradually developing into the full effulgence of morning, when the sun ascends the skies in his glory, and all nature rejoices in his genial rays. So it is with the true, faithful Christian. The beginning of his new life is comparatively feeble. But as his spiritual day advances, his hopes and graces strengthen, and his character shines with increasing lustre. Year after year this illuminating process continues. Nor does

the darkness of the carnal mind wholly disappear until death removes him to a higher sphere, where he shines with undiminished brightness forever.

When the Psalmist would magnify the glory of God, he represented him as wearing garments of light. "Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment." And Paul sought to express the same truth in like manner, when he spoke of God as "dwelling in light which no man can approach unto."

The Word of God is called light. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." Peter, also, employed the same figure, as follows: "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and day star arise in your hearts."

In the following passages Christ is spoken of as "Light." "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into

the world." When Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James, and John, his purity and glory were thus described: "And his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light." At another time he said of himself, "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness."

Such use of this symbol is frequently made in the Scriptures, and these examples will suffice for illustration. What the sun is to the natural, Christ is to the moral world. This was his meaning, evidently, when he claimed to be "the light of the world." What, then, are the qualities of natural light that render it a fit symbol of Christ? This is the question to be answered.

Light is vivifying.

It is owing to its benign influence upon the earth that the latter is rendered a fit abode for man. The thrift and beauty that adorn the fields are the production of this silent but powerful agent. Even the colors, that delight us with their richness and variety, are dependent upon the beams of the sun. The rose would part with its blushing hues at once, were the light that falls upon it day by day to be suddenly quenched. Beauty is one of the striking characteristics of the earth which we inhabit. It is

thus garnished, doubtless, in order to administer to the happiness of mankind. It is impossible to estimate the amount of enjoyment which this single quality of the earth contributes to man. Yet it all depends upon the existence and reflection of light.

By its action, also, vegetable life is elaborated from inorganic matter. Plants put forth, bud, and yield their increase; seed time and harvest appear; the seasons, with their flowers and fruits, revolve; and all the delightful changes and productions of the year spring from the ceaseless operation of light. Says Dr. Dick, speaking of the sun, "Without the influence of this august luminary, a universal gloom would ensue, and surrounding worlds, with all their trains of satellites, would be shrouded in perpetual darkness. This earth would become a lifeless mass, a dreary waste, a rude lump of inactive matter, without beauty or order. No longer should we behold the meadows clothed with verdure, the flowers shedding their perfumes, or "the valleys covered with corn." The feathered songsters would no longer chant their melodious notes; all human activity would cease; universal silence would reign undisturbed, and this huge globe of land and water would return to its original chaos."

From this it appears that the vivifying power of

light occupies no unimportant place among the agencies of the material world. It hence becomes a good representation of that spiritual light which Christ sheds abroad. Without the latter there is no moral thrift and loveliness in the world. Wherever the gospel has not exerted an influence upon society, there reigns moral death. Nothing can atone for the absence of this. Learning and art cannot accomplish much for a people, beyond mere social and intellectual refinement; and this is only temporary good. Philosophers have contended that education is ample to guide a people into the path of rectitude — that enough can be done for them intellectually to save them from the corruption and ruin which have been the fate of millions. But, in answer to this, there is the history of Greece and Rome, a triumphant refutation of all such erroneous views. Time was when the Greeks and Romans enjoyed such contributions of science, art, and literature, as fall to the lot of few. Learning flourished in almost unparalleled magnificence. Every spot was consecrated to education in some of its branches. But this refinement availed little to save the people from moral ruin. For a season they flourished in great splendor; but their downfall was sure. Destruction rushed upon them, at length, as an armed

man. They fell from their high position of refinement, and their very name became a type of moral degradation.

How was it with France? She sought to live without Christ. She pronounced his light darkness, and turned away from it. She proclaimed that Christianity was not only needless, but an imposition. She declared that the Sun of Righteousness should not shine upon her domains. She voted that Christ was not the "light of the world," and extolled her own darkness. The result is well known. Morality drooped and died in the streets. Domestic and social virtues withered for want of moral light. They could not thrive in moral darkness. The nation became wicked and vile. Her heart festered with corruption. She reeled, and almost plunged to ruin. It was another illustration that individuals and nations will perish without the gospel. Infidelity is a mighty disorganizer. The bands of society cannot hold out against its assaults. They will snap asunder. Plants cannot flourish if there is no day. A perpetual night destroys them. So the heart's virtues perish where the light of Christianity does not shine. It was so in Greece and Rome, in France and other countries. The nations, as well as neighborhoods and families, are to-day illustra-

tions of the indispensableness of the gospel to beautify and bless the moral world. The most immoral and godless communities are those where Christ has been banished from the habitations. The best communities — those in which the highest virtues abound — are those which have given Christ a hearty welcome. The influence of his truths preserves what is good therein, and gives existence to much that could not otherwise have a being. New and blooming graces spring up under the radiance of gospel light from apparently barren soil, just as fair buds and blossoms start from the earth beneath the rays of the vernal sun. Old, unpromising natural affections, dwarfed and warped by the incessant influence of sinful customs, bloom with new life and loveliness, as the dry, leafless stock and branch put on garments of grace when spring-time drives stern winter from the earth. Thus the most desolate regions, morally, are converted into fragrant "gardens of God," when Christ takes to himself his power, and reigns.

Look at New Zealand. A few years since the inhabitants of that island were degraded, filthy cannibals. They had no redeeming qualities. A more unpromising people scarcely lived. The beasts of the field were as refined as they. Human nature

could not be reduced much lower in the scale of character. Their sin-cursed hearts had parted even with natural affection. Those virtues that are not dependent upon religion for existence were trampled down, or torn up by the roots; so that nothing which could be called a family existed. The whole island was a moral Sahara, from which the deadly simoom of sin had swept the last vestige of moral verdure. But Christ went there. The missionaries of the cross conveyed him thither. The moment he stepped upon those shores, new light spread, and a change commenced. Hearts that were turned to stone began to feel. Other and healthier influences began to circulate. Human nature, dead in "trespasses and sins," showed signs of life. Currents of affection that had been frozen by the long winter of immorality began to flow. Men seemed like men again. The "true Light" dawned upon them, and they became "new creatures." The whole people were moved. The work of renovation advanced rapidly; and now that is a Christian land. What the natural sun has done for the physical world, *that* has Christ done for the moral condition of that island. He has preserved and vivified what was good in their down-trodden humanity, and "new-created" flowers of paradise, so that society there wears

quite another appearance. It is a great change that greets our eyes when the spring appears after a winter of barrenness and gloom, and from the dead earth start up forms of life and beauty, as if the voice of nature's God had proclaimed a resurrection of plants and flowers. But equally marked is the moral change which has been wrought upon that and other portions of the earth, elevating the masses far above that low level of bestiality described, inspiring them with new aims and hopes, and preparing them for the glory of the skies.

One of the most cheering views to be taken of the truth as it is in Jesus is this vivifying power which is fast filling the earth with moral bloom. Nothing can be more delightful than the upspringing of those principles and holy aims which the presence of Christ begets. Such influence may very properly be compared to light.

Light is purifying.

It is supposed to be the primary cause of some of those phenomena that conspire to render this world a safe and blissful abode for man. Dr. Dick says, "By this agency all winds are produced, which purify the atmosphere by keeping it in perpetual motion, which propel our ships across the ocean, dispel noxious vapors, prevent pestilential effluvia, and rid

our habitation of a thousand nuisances." If these remarks contain the truth, then we are dependent upon light for a pure atmosphere, such as may be inhaled with safety.

That the gospel is purifying to the moral atmosphere which we breathe may be inferred from the remarks upon its vivifying power. Other words need scarcely be added upon this point. We may briefly allude, however, by way of illustration, to the renovating and elevating influence of a holy character. A truly godly man radiates an influence that is felt by all around him. The community in which he resides is made better by his presence. He is a living rebuke to every form of wickedness that exists therein. Ten such men might save a Sodom by their Christian example and work. For, as light diffuses itself through all space, penetrating every nook and corner, so the influence of a holy life permeates every part of the social organism upon which it falls. For this reason, probably, God promised to save guilty Sodom from fiery desolation if ten righteous men could be found therein. So much leaven of the gospel was absolutely required to renovate that corrupt mass of humanity. The promise to Lot was a recognition of the truth that God works by means. If he could have had the

coöperation of only ten godly individuals, he would have converted even Sodom into a tolerable city for moral worth.

There are examples in our day which seem to substantiate this view of the subject. Twenty years ago a little church of seven members was organized in the city of Hamburg, Germany. The light which they set in the Lord's candlestick was very feeble; but the results are glorious. Fifty churches have grown out of that humble union of seven members. Fifty millions of persons have listened to the preaching of "Christ and him crucified" in consequence, and ten thousand of them have been hopefully converted. Less than ten righteous persons promise to save the city! If the power of Christ continues to multiply at this rate for one or two centuries to come, her salvation will be literally accomplished. Kindred examples are numerous in missionary fields. Neither are they wanting in our own land and times. There is a quiet New England village with whose history the writer is somewhat familiar. Not many years since, it was a wicked, degraded manufacturing village. There was no church there, nor even the observance of any religious rite. The attention of a pious young man, residing in a neighboring town, was directed to this godless place. He

opened a Sabbath school. The children came, and finally the parents attended. The young man felt his responsibility. He yearned over those immortal souls. He appointed public services on the Sabbath, and officiated himself. The Spirit of God came down; a revival was the result; many were converted. The place is now flourishing and moral, with two or three churches well sustained and useful. In this case, a *single* individual was the author of the purifying process.

Instances of this character are numerous among the hills and valleys of New England; but we need not cite them. Every person, doubtless, has been the witness of one or more examples of true piety, whose renovating influence has been similar. How often is vice abashed in the presence of exalted holiness! Its filthy lips are rebuked into silence, and its evil eye made to quail before it. The unexpected appearance of some well-known righteous man in a profane circle often puts a period to blaspheming utterances. The fact indicates the purifying tendency of holiness. So that we are constrained to say, if this be true of man, how much more must it be true of Christ! The more he is known by any people, the more do they desire to be like him. A clear, correct view of his sinless character is purifying in

itself. It is suggestive of higher and holier ways. It familiarizes the mind with the highest pattern of goodness. It wakens purer thoughts and desires. If every son and daughter of Adam could be made to study and know Christ as he is, so as to admire and imitate his character, the promised millennium would immediately dawn upon us. This is owing to the purifying tendency of the light that radiates from his perfections.

Light scatters darkness.

At this point the legitimate and special use of the symbol appears. It is probable that Christ had reference to the dispersion of the moral darkness in which the world was enveloped when he claimed to be "the Light of the world." This thought has been implied in the foregoing remarks. The Saviour had spent the night, as we have said, in the Mount of Olives, communing with the Father. His mind was familiar with darkness as it wrapped the slumbering world while he prayed. Hence, when the rising sun poured his brightness over hill and valley, the thought was very natural, "So shall the world's spiritual night disappear before the light which I shall shed abroad." This was probably the sum and substance of the Saviour's meaning when he compared himself to the light. But this embraces, in the details, the

vivifying and purifying developments of which mention has been made. We have pointed to the progress of the gospel in this and other lands, and cited facts to prove that its tendency is to renovate the earth; from which its power to scatter moral darkness may be inferred. It is not necessary, therefore, to dwell upon this part of the subject, except to meet an objection that is sometimes pressed against this view.

Some writers contend that the world is not becoming better under the spread of the gospel, but that, on the other hand, it is waxing worse and worse. This view is advocated by a few men of celebrity. If it be true, then the gospel has no tendency to disperse moral darkness. But it cannot be true. Such a sentiment is contrary to Philosophy and Fact. Christianity is a religion of progress, or the Lord's prayer is unmeaning jargon. Jesus, whom we accept as our well-beloved Saviour, taught his disciples to pray, "Thy kingdom come." If any meaning attaches to this supplication, it is that Christ will multiply his triumphs until his glorious kingdom fills the earth. If mankind are waxing worse as time rolls on, and that, too, by a law of God, then we are taught to pray against the decisions of the court of heaven. Our praying breath is

spent in vain. Our faith, also, droops and dies under the influence of this cheerless doctrine. The idea that the world will not grow better, though we labor and pray for it, is not very favorable for the development of faith in toils or prayers. All the highest and noblest elements of Christian activity are withered by the touch of this unphilosophical and unscriptural sentiment.

The experience and observation of every person of threescore years are sufficient to disprove this theory. His thoughts run back to a period when art, science, and religion had made little progress, comparatively, in the earth. In his childhood the comforts and luxuries of civilization were not a tithe so great. The means of education were small, and ignorance abounded. The modes of conveyance, the facilities of communication between different sections of country, the various implements of toil, and other things pertaining to human progress, were then very imperfect, in comparison with their present value. The nations, too, were sitting in darkness. No effort was made to send the gospel to them. Idolatry commanded the homage of millions of the race. The gates of nations were barred against Christ. He could not enter to set up his kingdom. But now, how changed! The herald of salvation

visits almost every land. He proclaims Christ, and gathers churches, under the very shadow of idol temples. He introduces the arts and sciences of this more highly favored country into the most benighted regions. Thus a change has been wrought in heathen lands, within the memory of persons of sixty or seventy years, which assures us that the world is becoming better.

Having at hand a succinct account of the change that has been wrought in the Sandwich Islands by the gospel, I will make a few extracts from it in confirmation of the foregoing. "Before missionary operations commenced, the people were, if not in the lowest state of barbarism in which men are ever found, yet certainly in a very low state of intellectual, social, and moral debasement; with no written language, with no comfortable dwellings, with very little clothing, with the family constitution in ruins, unmitigated licentiousness universal, and every vile passion indulged without restraint; the people 'a nation of drunkards,' with no laws or courts of justice. Society was a dead sea of pollution, and many ships visiting the islands were floating exhibitions of 'Sodom and Gomorrah.' The government was wholly arbitrary; the kings and priests were considered the owners of the soil, and the people were

slaves, with their property and their lives subject to the will of those above them." Within ten years from that time, "Not only had the language of the islands been reduced to writing, but two printing presses were in operation at Honolulu, at which 387,000 copies in all, of twenty-two distinct books in the native tongue, had been printed, amounting to 10,287,800 pages. A large edition of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and John had also been printed in the United States for the mission, swelling the whole number of pages in the Hawaiian language to 13,632,800. Nine hundred native schools, for teaching the people to read, were in operation, and about 45,000 scholars, about 21,000 readers, and more than 3000 writers were reported. The government had adopted the moral law of God as the basis of its future administration, and recognized the Christian religion as the religion of the nation. Most of the higher chiefs and rulers were members of the church of Christ. Special laws against the grosser vices, and also against retailing ardent spirits, Sabbath breaking, and gambling, had been enacted and were enforced, and the Christian law of marriage was the law of the land." Since that period the progress has been still more marked. Now the government is classed with the Christian governments of the

age. "In no country probably are the children more universally collected into schools. The government expends near $50,000 annually for purposes of education; of which between $25,000 and $30,000 is for the support of common schools." "External morality is more generally practised here," writes the pastor of the church in Hilo, the largest church in the world, "than in most nations, or perhaps *any* nation. Nowhere on earth are life and property more secure. Nowhere may the people sleep with open doors, by the way side or in the forest, with more safety than here. Nowhere may the traveller with more impunity encamp where night overtakes him, lay his purse by his side, hang his watch on a tree, and commit himself to sleep. Open crimes are of rare occurrence here." Again the same writer says, "Allow me to say that the gospel has effected a signal triumph on these shores. *Savageism* has fled before it, never to return. Idolatry, in its grossest forms, has fallen, never to rise again. Ignorance and superstition have fled apace before its rising light."

Such is one example of progress by means of Christianity. Such instances might be multiplied. Can we say, in view of them, that mankind are becoming more corrupt? that the world continues to

deteriorate in moral character? that the light of truth does not scatter moral darkness from the earth? This cannot be said, I repeat, without denying the most obvious facts. On every hand we behold that Christ illuminates society. Directly and indirectly he blesses and elevates men wherever he is welcomed. It is a truth, illustrated again and again, that man has no better friend than Jesus. He is the Prince of benefactors. In him every longing is satisfied, every want is supplied. This augurs well for the future. We may adopt the beautiful hymn of Montgomery as the language of our hearts:

"He shall come down like showers
Upon the fruitful earth,
And love, joy, hope, like flowers,
Spring in his path to birth:
Before him, on the mountains,
Shall Peace, the herald, go;
And Righteousness, in fountains,
From hill to valley flow.

"Arabia's desert ranger
To him shall bow the knee,
The Ethiopian stranger
His glory come to see;
With offerings of devotion,
Ships from the isles shall meet,
To pour the wealth of ocean
In tribute at his feet.

"Kings shall fall down before him,
And gold and incense bring,
All nations shall adore him,
His praise all people sing:
For he shall have dominion
O'er river, sea, and shore,
Far as the eagle's pinion
Or dove's light wing can soar."

In close connection with the foregoing there is another thought. Light is an apt symbol of Christ, not only in respect to the fact of removing spiritual darkness, but also in respect to the *rapidity* with which his truth advances. Swiftness is one of the qualities of light; and no one can ponder the instances of the gospel's triumph cited, without perceiving the rapid strides which it has made at times. In the days of the apostles it was eminently so. Were all Christians active in coöperating with the Saviour at the present time, its advancement would be far more rapid. We see enough of its progress to show us that it might spread well nigh with the rapidity of light.

It is also a pleasing thought for the Christian to revolve, that the gospel, like light, is indestructible. No earthly power can destroy a sunbeam. The whole race of men might encounter the sun's rays, and beat against them with all their might, and still they shine on, unquenched and undimmed. It is so

with the truth in Christ. It has been assailed by the strongest powers of earth. It has been stretched upon the rack, and immured in dungeons. It has been legislated and voted down. It has been proscribed and excommunicated. Its progress has been opposed by "iron bars and brazen gates." But it has not been destroyed. Men have been little more successful in their attempts to extirpate it from the earth, than they would be in issuing decrees and proclaiming war against the sun. Persecution has not crippled its power. Fire and the sword have not reduced it to ashes, nor left it expiring upon the field of conflict. Revolutions have not buried it beneath shattered thrones and governments. From every hard-fought battle and convulsion of ages past, it has come forth victorious, without a stain of blood, or the minutest soil of sin upon its armor. So will it ever be, until the last foe of Jesus surrenders, and lays down his weapons of rebellion, amid the jubilant shouts of those who ascend to glory with "songs and everlasting joy upon their heads."

Here, too, is symbolized the power of truth. Perhaps we are not accustomed to regard light as a *powerful* agent. It is so friendly and cheering in its beams that it appears to be rather emblematical of gentleness. How silently it falls! There is no

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noise in its coming — no sound in its departure. We think generally of the thunder and the earthquake when we look for illustrations of power. But these are feeble in comparison with that agent that develops a flower. It is evidence of greater force to cause a plant to bud and blossom than to tottle down a fortress. And this is the constant influence of light. Says a popular writer, "The prairies waving with wheat, and the forests studded with oaks, make no noise; and the electricity which roars in the thunder peal is not a tithe so powerful as that which sleeps in the light." In this regard, then, light is a fit symbol of Christ. His gospel is unpretending and noiseless, yet "mighty to pull down the strongholds of Satan." It is not only indestructible, as we have seen, but *irresistible*. The facts cited prove that it is omnipotent to achieve through the sanctifying power of the Spirit. We have spoken of its vivifying the lifeless virtues of humanity, and creating moral loveliness in the midst of spiritual barrenness. More power is required to give existence to the smallest grace of religion than to revolutionize a government, or to rear a pyramid. The light which the Saviour has radiated from his character and works has wrought changes which all the armies of the earth could not have effected.

V.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

"I am the good Shepherd."

There is a fold whence none can stray,
And pastures ever green,
Where sultry sun, or stormy day,
Or night is never seen.

Far up the everlasting hills,
In God's own light it lies;
His smile its vast dimension fills
With joy that never dies.

One narrow way, one darksome wave,
Divides that land from this;
I have a SHEPHERD, pledged to save,
And bear me home to bliss. REV. J. EAST.

TRAVELLERS inform us that one of the principal pleasures in visiting Oriental countries is derived from the light and beauty reflected upon the imagery of the Scriptures borrowed from pastoral life. The employments and scenes of this mode of life are thus made to subserve the high purpose of illustrating and enforcing the truth. The instructions of our

Lord abound in such pleasing illustrations and figures, so that his simple and lucid discourses are truly ornate. The human heart yields to the charm which such allusions impart to the Saviour's counsels. Old and young are alike swayed by this kind of writing. It is invested with a sort of witchery that refined spirits, at least, cannot resist.

In all the imagery that Christ employed to enforce important truths, perhaps none is more delightful than that which is borrowed from the life of the shepherd. Here the church is denominated a "sheep fold," its members are the "sheep," and Christ is the "good Shepherd." Perhaps no human employment ever possessed so many innocent attractions as that of tending flocks. It was always regarded honorable; and in some ages and nations it was deemed worthy of the most refined and gifted men. Its history runs back to the days of Abel, and it is associated with the lives of some of the greatest and holiest men of primitive ages. Moses, with all his learning and refinement, "kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian." The first forty years of his life were spent in the court of Pharaoh; the second forty years he was a shepherd; and the third forty years he was a leader and ruler of Israel. Says a writer, "The patriarchal

shepherds, rich in flocks and herds, in silver and gold, and attended by a numerous train of servants purchased with their money, or hired from the neighboring towns and villages, acknowledged no civil superior; they held the rank and exercised the rights of sovereign princes; they concluded alliances with the kings in whose territory they tended their flocks; they made peace or war with the surrounding states; and, in fine, they wanted nothing of sovereign authority but the name."

The shepherds of the East were a mild and gentle class, characterized by profound reverence for God. Their occupation was peculiarly adapted to familiarize their minds with the wisdom, power, and goodness of Him who made heaven and earth. Every natural object witnesses to the skill of the Creator, from the tiniest flower to the loftiest tree. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge." On hill and plain, in "green pastures," and beside "still waters," the shepherd is reminded of God. And, independent of this looking "through nature up to nature's God," rural scenes exert a softening and subduing influence upon every mind that is able to appreciate their beauties. There is no doubt that

human character is affected more or less by natural scenery. This is a fact which has been noticed and ably discussed by distinguished writers. And if this be true, the occupation of the shepherd is singularly adapted to impress his social and moral nature. In the light of such facts there appears to be marked appropriateness in Christ's reference to himself as the "good Shepherd." We shall be able to perceive the full force of the allusion, however, only by considering some of the characteristics of a good shepherd, as he was known when Christ was on earth.

He knew his flock.

"I am the good Shepherd, *and know my sheep*, and am known of mine." This allusion contains rich and precious thoughts for the Christian. The good shepherds of Palestine were able to distinguish their own flocks from others, though many flocks might have huddled together. They were able to go into the fields and select their own sheep from any number feeding there. This was done partly by the eye and partly by the voice. They might not have been able to distinguish all their sheep by looking at them, but whenever they were not able to note them in this way, they had only to lift the voice, and immediately every sheep accustomed to

it would follow. To this Christ referred when he said, "and am known of mine." His allusion to this fact was still more explicit when he said, "The sheep hear his voice, and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him; *for they know his voice.*" No matter how far any one of the flock had strayed, if she could but hear the shepherd's voice, she followed and was safe. But no other voice was regarded except with alarm. Hence the words, "And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers." They perceived nothing friendly in its sound. They were accustomed to the voice of the shepherd, and understood its meaning.

A good shepherd was known from the fact that his flock *knew him.* If he was a watchful, careful, tender, faithful shepherd, the flock ran at his call, and exhibited the strongest affection for him. But if, on the other hand, he was negligent, unkind, and severe, they wandered away, or reluctantly followed. Therefore the appearance of the flock in this regard would quite accurately indicate the character of the shepherd. How appropriate the allusion, "and know my sheep, and am known of mine"! This could be said of no other than a *good* shepherd.

The term "know" expresses more than bare recognition — it includes something of love, confidence. The most marked attachment subsisted between the shepherd and his flock. Those who have been eye witnesses of the fact say that the strongest affection of the dog for his master does not exceed that of the sheep for their faithful guides. He handled and caressed them much as men do the most playful pets. When danger threatened, they ran to him. The howling of a wolf sent the most distant of the flock bounding back to the shepherd. They appeared to feel safe at his side.

This acquaintance of the shepherd with his flock was even more marked. We read, "He calleth his own sheep by name." And does he actually name his sheep? We are so informed. Hartley, in his "Journal of a Tour in Greece," says, "I asked my man if it was usual in Greece to give names to the sheep. He informed me that it was, and that the sheep obeyed when he called them by their names. This morning I had an opportunity of verifying the truth of this remark. Passing by a flock of sheep, I asked the shepherd the same question which I had put to the servant, and he gave me the same answer. I then bade him call one of his sheep. He did so, and it instantly left its pasturage and its compan-

ions, and ran up to the hand of the shepherd with signs of pleasure, and with a prompt obedience. It is also true of the sheep in this country, that, 'A stranger they will not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers.' The shepherd told me that many of his sheep were still wild; that they had not yet learned their names; but that by teaching they would all learn them." Paxton and other writers confirm the above statement. These names were usually suggested by some peculiarity about the animal. Thus Roberts says, "Should a sheep or cow have a bad temper, (or any other failing,) it will be called the angry one, the malicious, or sulky, or wandering one; the killer of her young, the fiend; the mad one, the jumper, the limper, the dwarf, the barren, the fruitful, the short, the fat, the tricky one."

In all this there is much to render the relation of Christ to his church, as Shepherd, very interesting and affecting. He knows "whom he has chosen." He is not merely acquainted with his flock as a whole — he knows each *individual* member. He understands the particular character, aims, hopes, joys, and sorrows of each. When he says, "I am the good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine," he means to express his deep interest in,

and intimate knowledge of, his children. His knowledge of them is so particular and thorough that he calls them by name. Nor is it difficult to give characteristic names to each one of the number. They may be derived from some moral peculiarity belonging to each one. There is Thomas, who might be called the doubter; and John, the beloved; and Peter, the coward; and Stephen, the martyr; and Judas, the traitor; and Abraham, the faithful; and Moses, the meek; and thus on through the entire church. The weakness of one, the humility of another, the rashness of a third, the fidelity of a fourth, the worldliness of a fifth, are all peculiarities which are known to the great Head of the church. He knows each member of the Christian flock for such one of these characteristics as marks him in the fold. It is a pleasant thought, and a startling one too — pleasant to the pure in heart, to the humble, faithful, holy; but startling to the careless, worldly, and slothful. Yes; the eye of Him who never sleeps or slumbers glances over "the sheep of his pasture," and he sees who is afar off, and who is near by, who wanders, and who follows. There can be no concealment, no deception.

And then how consoling the thought that he knows every earthly trial of his children! No

shepherd ever knew and cared for the lame, sick, and feeble of his flock with greater devotion than Christ sympathizes with his followers in their wants and woes. "He gathereth the lambs with his arm, and carrieth them in his bosom, and gently leadeth those that are with young." Does he not thus enter into every particular circumstance of mortal life? Ah, yes! He is a Shepherd who attends his flock on the mountain of joy and in the vale of sorrow. He knows them in every condition and place.

A good shepherd led his flock.

"He goeth before them, and the sheep follow." He did not attempt to *drive* them, for this would have been impossible. The flock would have been thrown into confusion, or scattered by the attempt to drive, as churches have sometimes been rent asunder by spiritual leaders who love coercion. In Anderson's Tour through Greece, we read that, "All day long the shepherd attends his flock, *leading* them into 'green pastures,' near fountains of water, and chooses a convenient place for them to 'rest at noon.'" Often flocks were so numerous that shepherds were obliged to drive them to a great distance for pasturage, and be absent weeks and even months. Of this fact Roberts speaks as follows: "As the sons of Jacob had to go to a great distance to feed

their flocks, so still they are often absent for one and two months together, in the place where there is plenty of pasturage. In their removals it is interesting to see the shepherds carrying the lambs in their bosoms, and also to witness how gently they 'lead those that are with young.'"

It is customary for the shepherd to select a green spot, and there take his position, when the flock immediately gather around him to crop the vegetation. When the feed is exhausted in that place, he removes to another, and thus on, day after day and week after week. The flock depends entirely upon him for places of sustenance and rest. They hesitate not to follow him wherever he leads the way, over lofty mountains, down rugged hills, through valley and desert.

A mere hireling is often negligent in selecting the most luxurious spots for the flock. If he consults his ease he is very likely to seek rest for himself rather than rich fields for his sheep. But the good shepherd is distinguished for leading to "green pastures." He performs wearisome journeys in search of such inviting fields. Paxton informs us that Arabian shepherds sometimes went into Egypt, a distance of four hundred leagues, to find the best grazing regions. No fatigue, hardship, or danger

deterred them from the attempt to feed their flocks in this generous way.

He also led them "beside the still waters." It was a very important and often difficult work for a shepherd to supply his flock with water. The fountain and stream were seldom found in the desert, where the Oriental shepherd was often obliged to lead his flock. Eastern deserts are not altogether barren wastes. Here and there oases appear; and small streams and bubbling springs relieve the desolation. These were sought by the shepherd who performed his pastoral duties with fidelity. Vegetation thrived around these "still waters," so that two objects were secured by finding them.

With these facts before us, we perceive great force and beauty in such texts as the following: "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name sake." "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd." "I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to

lie down, saith the Lord God." "I will set up one Shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their Shepherd." "They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places. They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them; for He that hath mercy on them shall lead them; even by the springs of water shall he guide them, and I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted." "I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD."

The relation of Christ to his followers could not be more appropriately expressed than it is by this figurative language. He "*leadeth*" them, and the faithful ones *follow* at his call. They "know his voice," for it has often fallen tenderly upon their ears, and it is easily distinguished from that of the deceiver. "He goeth before them." It is not rough driving, but gentle guiding. He does not take them over an unknown road; he himself has trodden it before. He hath drunk of every "brook by the way." He himself hath "suffered, being tempted;" he is "able to succor them that are tempted." He seems to say, "Fear not; I cannot lead you wrong; follow me in the bleak waste, the blackened wilderness, as well as by the green pastures and the still waters. Do you ask why I have left the sunny side

of the valley, — carpeted with flowers, and bathed in sunshine, — leading you to some high mountain apart, some cheerless spot of sorrow? Trust me, I will lead you by paths you have not known, but they are all known *to* me, and selected *by* me — 'Follow thou me.'" *

Alas for the careless ones who heed not the voice of the Shepherd! See them famishing "in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is!" See them fall upon the dark mountains of sin!

What could more forcibly express the truths, promises, and glorious revelations of the divine Word, than "*green pastures*"? How rich, promising, and refreshing to the immortal soul! Thousands have followed Christ thither, and found a "feast of fat things." And the "still waters" — how aptly do they symbolize the crystal fountain of salvation! "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." Sweet, gracious promise! To thirsty souls in this desert world, how reviving!

"So pilgrims on the scorching sand,
Beneath a burning sky,
Long for a cooling stream at hand,
And they must drink or die."

* Words of Jesus, p. 33.

To those sources of spiritual joy, refreshment, hope, strength, and life, the good Shepherd leadeth.

The shepherd was often deceived in the wilderness in regard to the existence of fountains and streams. Paxton speaks of this circumstance as follows: "Often, as he pursues his journey, a broad expanse of water, clear as crystal, seems to open to his view; and faint and weary under the fierce sunbeam, he gazes on the unexpected relief with ineffable delight, and fondly anticipates a speedy termination to his present distress. He quickens his pace, and hastens to the spot; but to his utter disappointment, the vision disappears, and nothing remains but the dry and thirsty wilderness." But there is no such deception where the "great Shepherd and Bishop of souls" leads the way. No fainting member of his flock ever truly sought the "green pastures" and "still waters" in vain. They have found the real pool and overflowing fountain, and have had a rich experience of grace and mercy in Christ, of which the prophet gives appropriate symbols. "And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water."

Nor is this all. The blessing that flows from the service of Christ on earth is only a *foretaste* of a richer experience when the flock shall be folded in

the heavenly Canaan. Peace, safety, rest, joy, glory — these are some of the elements of that immortal life which the faithful will have in the "Better Land." "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

The good shepherd was tender of his flock.

I have said already that Eastern shepherds were proverbially mild and gentle. The prosperity and existence of their flocks depended upon their tender care. At one time the shepherds of Egypt were an "abomination," according to the inspired penman. Some commentators suppose that they were called thus because of their unkindness and cruelty. Whether this was so or not, the utmost tenderness on the part of the shepherd was necessary to lead a flock successfully. They were obliged to be tender in leading, tender in watching, and tender in folding them. How touchingly Jacob alluded to this when Esau, after their reconciliation, said, "Let us take our journey, and let us go, and I will go before thee." "My lord knoweth," replied Jacob, "that the children are tender, and the flocks and herds with young are with me, and if men should overdrive them one day, all the flock will die." So careful was the patriarch of his flocks!

Dr. Shaw remarks, "The greatest skill and vigilance, and even tender care, are required in the management of such immense flocks as wander on the Syrian plains. Their prodigious numbers compel the keepers to remove them too frequently in search of fresh pastures, which proves very destructive to the young that have not strength to follow." Anderson says, "He, (the shepherd,) when travelling, tenderly watches over them, *and carries such as are exhausted in his arms.*" We have already quoted a paragraph from Roberts, in which he says, "It is an interesting sight to see the shepherds carrying the lambs in their bosoms, and also to see how gently they 'lead those that are with young.'" This last quotation alludes to the custom that prevails among shepherds of carrying the little lambs in their arms as they move from one place to another. Travellers frequently speak of this as a very touching scene. The dams will stand by their new-born offspring until they perish if the shepherd does not bear the feeble creatures to the fold. As soon as the fond parent sees the lamb safe in the shepherd's bosom, she confidingly and happily walks along by his side. The whole scene is one of deepest interest.

Similar care was exercised over the lame, the exhausted, and the sick. Some observers have said

that children are not cared for with more concern, apparently, than the shepherd exhibited for the suffering ones of his charge.

Now take, in this connection, the allusions of the Scriptures to these marks of tenderness in setting forth the attributes of the great Shepherd. The prophet Isaiah foretold of the Saviour, that "he shall gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom." And did he not, when upon earth, take little children in his arms and bless them? When the people rebuked the loving mothers for bringing their infants to receive his benediction, did he not say, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God?" Behold a shepherd with a lamb in his bosom! Behold Christ with a child in his arms! How striking the symbol! How accurate the prediction! And in a more important sense the Saviour carries the lambs of the household flock in his bosom. More than half the number whose tiny voices send gladness and joy through the homes of earth, are taken to the Saviour's bosom in childhood — safe there from the cold storms of sorrow, and the assaults of the tempter. Why will not the parent as confidingly leave them there, as the gentle dam of the East trusts her lambkin in the arms of the shep-

herd? Is not the great Shepherd tender and watchful? May he not have saved the little ones a bitter experience, and hard fate, in this world of sin and trial?

We are told of an Eastern shepherd, who, on folding his flock one night, perceived a solitary sheep in the distance. He called, and called, but she only looked wistfully towards him. After all his endeavors to allure her to the fold, she did not come. He approached her, and found a new-born lamb in the grass. He took it in his arms to bear away, when the fond mother at once and joyfully followed after. So we have seen a mother refuse the calls of Christ, though he called again and again. But by and by, when he came and took a child, and bore it away in his bosom, she followed him to her joy. The great Shepherd is wise, and knows how to win souls to himself.

No one can fail to see the appropriateness of the foregoing reference to Christ in respect to tenderness. This development of character appears in all his acts and works. When he wept over Jerusalem, and at the grave of Lazarus, and when he provided for his mother in the hour of crucifixion, and exhibited such watchful care over his disciples, loving them to the end, he exhibited this winning trait.

We are taught that he has special solicitude for the weak and tempted, for he has been "in all points tempted like as we are." His tender care extends to all the young, and he has uttered special and cheering promises for them. "Those that seek me early shall find me." And how thoroughly it pervades those pathetic utterances of his like the following: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

In this connection I may properly refer to another custom with shepherds. They were wont to carry a staff with them, crooked at one end, and hence it is sometimes called a "crook." The Psalmist alluded to this in the psalm beginning, "The Lord is my Shepherd," when he said, "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." This staff was crooked at the end with reference to the size and form of the neck of sheep, so that when they crowded together at a pool or stream of water, the shepherd could reach forth the staff, and, placing the crooked end around the neck of the sheep, one after another, pull them back, without injuring them at all. It was a very tender way of correcting an evil among the flocks.

This custom points significantly to the gentle manner by which Christ restrains his followers from moral excesses. They are prone to venture too far into the world, and to drink too long and deeply from the fountain of earthly pleasure, so that he is obliged to draw them back, and check their tendency to waywardness and folly. This he does by those trials and afflictions which come and go at his bidding. "A worldly spirit has strong influences to check it. What a lecture a fever gives to it! or a funeral! What a lesson the grave-yard reads in its ears! What a rebuke, when the man bears to the tomb the son for whom he thought he was hoarding his thousands! The miseries we suffer are sent to repress a spirit of worldliness which might ruin us without them."

The good shepherd searches for "the sheep that is gone astray."

If he has "a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth unto the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?" This the faithful shepherd always did. When one of the flock strayed away, she never returned of herself, but wandered farther and farther into the wilderness; and it was often the most wearisome, and even peril-

ous undertaking to search for these wanderers. But the good shepherd was distinguished for his perseverance in this pastoral duty. He plunged into tangled forests, stopping not for wounds nor weariness, and considered himself amply rewarded if he found that which was lost. And "how tenderly the shepherd handled that sheep which cost him all this labor and fatigue! He did not punish it; he did not smite, nor even harshly *drive* it back to the fold; nay, he did not deliver it to a servant, but he laid it upon his own shoulders, and himself carefully carried it, till he brought it to the fold." So we read, "And when he hath found it, he layeth it upon his shoulders rejoicing."

In like manner Christ pursues the wanderers from *his* flock. "All we, like sheep, have gone astray;" and not one would return unless he sought us. We have no disposition to return, nor are we able of ourselves to find the way back to the fold. Therefore the good Shepherd seeks us in our reckless wanderings. He "came to save that which was lost," and he goeth after it "until he find it." "As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places

where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day." "I will seek that which is lost, and bring again that which was driven away." How many are ready to testify that they should have been wanderers still, had not the Saviour followed them with his gracious call of mercy! O, what wearisome days and sleepless nights he spent in the undertaking! What sorrow and suffering were inseparable from that sacred mission! Say, follower of the Lamb, is your heart touched and bowed in view of the stupendous sacrifice? Behold that the pursuit led him, not only through vales of sorrow, but through "bloody seas" to Calvary and the cross! And all for you, a wanderer! Well may you sing, —

"Far from his fold we went astray;
The howling wilderness he crossed,
From Satan plucked us as a prey,
Nor spared himself to save the lost."

Says Trench, "There is no image upon which the early church seems to have dwelt with greater delight than this of Christ as the good Shepherd bringing home his lost sheep. We have abundant confirmation of this in the very many gems, seals, fragments of glass, and other early Christian relics which have reached us, on which Christ is thus

portrayed as bringing back a lost sheep to the fold upon his shoulders. From a passing allusion in Tertullian we learn that it was in his time painted on the chalice of the holy communion. Christ appears in the same character of the good Shepherd in bass-reliefs on sarcophagi and paintings in the catacombs — one of which last is believed to be as early as the third century. Sometimes there are other sheep at his feet, generally two, looking up with apparent pleasure at him and his burden: in his right hand he most often holds the seven-reeded pipe of Pan, the attractions of divine love; with his left he steadies the burden that he is bearing on his shoulders. Sometimes he is sitting down, as if weary with the length of the way."

Surely no device more appropriate could be inscribed upon the communion service than that of Christ restoring his lost sheep. For every one who lifts the cup to his lip is a living witness to the fact. The Lord's supper, with its group of Christian partakers, is a standing memorial of this most precious truth, and ever will be "till he come."

The good shepherd gave "his life for the sheep." Robbers and beasts of prey infested pastoral countries, so that flocks were destroyed without the watchfulness and protection of faithful shepherds.

Shepherds have been known to sacrifice their lives in defending their flocks from devouring beasts. Indeed, he who should have escaped when danger was nigh, leaving the innocent sheep to perish, would have been thereafter an object of contempt. The Saviour alludes to this. "I am the good Shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep." When danger does not threaten, and life is not hazarded, the hireling may carefully watch over the flock. But when peril lies in his path, and the howl of approaching beasts is heard, he betakes himself to flight, to his own shame, and the destruction of the flock. But the shepherd himself has such a deep interest in every one of his flock that he braves every peril and protects them to the death.

I need not say that Christ laid down his life for the sheep. It is the great central truth of Christianity. Without it there is no gospel, and no hope for a lost world. For eighteen hundred years his followers have commemorated that wonderful fact.

The sacrament is a perpetual remembrancer of it. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and by his stripes we are healed." "He died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him." "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." "And what a life was laid down! — a life more valuable than all the lives of men or of angels — the life of an absolutely innocent, an absolutely perfect man — a man possessed of all possible wisdom, and holiness, and benignity — a man infinitely dignified by personal union to Divinity! The blood shed for us, and by which we are redeemed, is infinitely more valuable, and therefore the shedding of it infinitely more expressive of love, than would have been the sacrifice of the whole created universe. And then, still further, the life was laid down in the room of the guilty; the death was the death of a victim. Ah, to die on the field of battle in a glorious cause is a very different thing from dying on a cross like a felonious slave. Yes, the death of our Lord, for the salvation of his people, is an overwhelming proof that he is the good Shepherd!"

A single thought more. "AND THERE SHALL BE ONE FOLD AND ONE SHEPHERD!" One in spirit, one in aim, one in hope, one in love! Now there are many folds, and between some of them there is a yawning gulf. There is a want of sympathy and union without which they will continue to be separate and divided. But the day is coming when the truly blood-washed sheep will be gathered from every flock into one great fold. Then we shall not have Presbyterian folds, nor Congregational folds, nor Baptist folds, nor Methodist folds, nor any of the other folds so numerous; but there will be the *heavenly* fold on the plains of paradise — "ONE FOLD AND ONE SHEPHERD."

Green pastures and clear streams,
  Freedom and quiet rest,
Christ's flock enjoy, beneath his beams,
  Or in his shadow rest.

Secure, amidst alarms,
  From violence or snares,
The lambs he gathers in his arms,
  And in his bosom bears.

The wounded and the weak
  He comforts, heals, and binds;
The lost he came from heaven to seek,
  And saves them when he finds.

Conflicts and trials done,
His glory they behold,
Where Jesus and his flock are one —
One Shepherd and one fold.

MONTGOMERY.

VI.

THE TRUE VINE.

"I am the true vine."

Weary pilgrim, lift thine eye;
Downward through the yielding sky,
Lo! the vine of Canaan bends,
Near the hand that faith extends;
Branches laden with such fruit
As thy parching thirst will suit:
Fainting with the summer's heat,
Thou art welcome — take and eat.
Nay, why dost thou trembling stand?
Why withhold thy timid hand?
'Tis no dream — this vine is TRUE!
Taste — the vintage is for you.
Merit! — 'tis an idle dream;
All thy merit — need of Him;
Quicken, then, thy lingering feet:
Thou art welcome — take and eat.

REV. J. EAST.

SOME commentators suppose that the Saviour said, "I am the true vine," at the institution of the Lord's supper, the comparison being suggested by the fruit of the vine before him. Others think these words

were spoken on his way from the city to the Mount of Olives just after the supper was eaten. Others, still, are convinced that this comparison was suggested to him by an artificial, golden vine that decorated the walls of the temple, and that, therefore, these words must have been uttered in that sacred place. Of that vine Rosenmueller says that it was richly carved, and extended above and around the gate seventy cubits high. "The branches, tendrils, and leaves were of the finest gold; the stalks of the branches were of the length of the human form, and the bunches hanging upon them were of costly jewels. Herod first placed it there; rich and patriotic Jews from time to time added to its embellishment; one contributing a new grape, another a leaf, and a third even a bunch of the same precious materials. If to compute its value at more than twelve millions of dollars be an exaggeration, it is nevertheless indisputable that this vine must have had an uncommon importance and a sacred meaning in the eyes of the Jews." Now, as this splendid vine was an object of admiration to all beholders, Jesus might have pointed to it as the symbol of a great truth contained in the words which he uttered. It certainly would have been a very impressive allusion to those who were listening to his discourse.

But it is of little consequence to us when or where the words were spoken. We are chiefly concerned with their meaning. If we can but perceive and apply the truth contained therein, the object for which they were uttered will be accomplished.

There is certainly great aptness in this comparison. For the vine is an object of attraction in every clime. It is adorned with grace and thrift, and is, withal, so useful, that it is almost universally a pet plant.

But in what respects may Christ be compared to a vine?

The vine is an emblem of humility.

It is less showy and remarkable in appearance than many other plants. It will grow where other plants will not. It requires little room for cultivation. It creeps upon the earth unless provided with support. Tear away its tendrils from the support to which they cling, as the heart's affections do to loved ones, and it falls to the earth and flourishes there. Compared with lofty trees that spread their giant branches to the storms, and especially with vast forests that sublimely lift their aspiring fronts, it is very humble indeed. The violet, that grows so modestly in the tender grass has always been regarded a humble thing; but the vine is humbler

still. It is not decked with a single gaudy color, and even its blossom, unlike that of most other plants, is devoid of attractions. Perhaps the inspired writer made allusion to this when he said, "He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground; he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him there is no beauty that we should desire him." Here the prophet does not refer to his moral perfections, but to his humble origin and appearance. He was so humble in his birth and manner of life, appearing and living in a way so entirely contrary to the expectation of the Jews, that they saw nothing in him to admire.

Moreover, the Saviour was not only humble in origin and manner of life, but also in spirit. He aspired not after the riches and honors of the world, or any thing else that the proud desire. He had nothing of that show and splendor which the ambitious regard as essential to earthly distinction. All this he scrupulously avoided as inimical to the great design of his mission. He was meek and lowly in heart. He "humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Whatever of greatness belonged to Christ was spiritual; and such greatness always dwells with

humility as an essential companion. This is greatness which never loses its dignity and power ; and yet it is unassuming, and even retiring. Like the vine, it hangs its richest clusters where worldly greatness cannot even exist.

> "The bird that soars on highest wing
> Builds on the ground her lowly nest;
> And she that doth most sweetly sing,
> Sings in the shade when all things rest;
> In lark and nightingale we see
> What honor hath humility."

The vine grows every where.

It differs, in this regard, from many other things which flourish by careful culture. There is scarcely a soil upon which it will not grow, nor a land where it cannot be made a source of profit. The traveller finds it in every country where the earth is tilled, and it even springs up in the "wilderness and solitary place." The poorest cottager can have it around his humble abode ; and travellers in the East tell us that it is often nearly all that renders the dwellings of the poor other than repulsive. It can be cultivated almost "without money and without price," so that it is often the poor man's only revenue. He plants it beside his walls. He trains it over the roof of his humble dwelling. He causes

it to grow in every nook and corner of his homestead.

The vine will make any kind of a tree or object its support. Its vigor and fruitfulness do not depend upon the object on which it climbs. It thrives upon the wild wood of the forest as well as upon a golden trellis ; upon the poor man's fence as well as on the rich man's arbor.

In all this we see an appropriate symbol of the true vine — Christ. He will abide in every land. He will yet be found on every shore. That is the promise of the Most High. That is the object of Christ's coming. His gospel is suited to the wants of every people, and every heart. It flourishes as really in the east as in the west, in the north as in the south. It has been planted in the cheerless regions of superstition and idolatry, and it has grown there, and yielded fruit a hundred fold. The poor man can have it as really as the rich ; yea, he that "hath no money" can receive it, and enjoy its precious fruits "without money and without price." It is all that many of the lowly have in this world of sin. True, it will flourish better in some places than in others. In like manner, the vine, while it will grow almost every where, will thrive better in some localities than in others. Religion has its

congenial soil, and in that, of course, it will be most luxurious. There are scenes and circles where the gospel has little encouragement, and yet even there it *can*, and does at times, take deep root. It is destined to go forth as brightness "to earth's remotest bounds." This is a subject of prophecy and promise. "It shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it." "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge and glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him."

The vine yields the most delicious and useful fruit in abundance.

In this country we behold little of that thrift which belonged to the "choice vine" of the Hebrews. In the forty-ninth chapter of Genesis, Jacob speaks of a vine so large that an ass could be securely tied to it. Paxton says, "In some parts of Persia it was formerly the custom to turn their cattle into the vineyards, after the vintage, to browse on the vines, some of which are so large that a man can hardly compass their trunks in his

arms. From this it appears that, agreeably to the prediction of Jacob, the ass might be securely bound to the vine, without damaging the tree by browsing on its leaves and branches. The same custom appears from the narratives of several travellers to have generally prevailed in the Lesser Asia." Says Schultz, "At Beidtdjin, a village near Ptolemais, we took our supper under a large vine, the stem of which was nearly a foot and a half in diameter, the height about thirty, and covered with its branches and shoots a hut more than fifty feet long and broad. The bunches of these grapes are so large that they weigh from ten to twelve pounds. Such a bunch is cut off and laid on a board, round which they seat themselves, and each helps himself to as many as he pleases." We are told of a much larger bunch of grapes in the thirteenth chapter of Numbers. It was cut off at Eshcol, and was so large that two men bore it between them "upon a staff" to the camp of Israel at Kadesh-barnea. We read that "the place was called the brook Eshcol, because of the cluster of grapes which the children of Israel cut down from thence." We are told that "a single vine, planted by the Empress Lavinia, yielded one hundred and eight gallons of wine in one year."

Jacob drew a most beautiful figure from the fruit-

fulness of the vine, to express the future prosperity of Joseph, his son. "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall." There is an allusion here to the ancient custom of building high walls around wells, over which the vine was trained. The Psalmist, also, in bewailing the declension of the church, presents it under the figure of a vine that has lost its once remarkable luxuriousness. His words are very beautiful. "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt; thou hast cast out the heathen and planted it. Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. The hills are covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river. Why hast thou then broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her? The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it. Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts; look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine. And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch that thou madest strong for thyself."

The grape has always been regarded a great luxury, and it has been devoted to various useful pur-

poses. Its juice has been used medicinally in all ages and climes. The good Samaritan, who found the wounded traveller by the roadside, between Jerusalem and Jericho, poured oil and wine into his lacerated flesh.

By allusion to such facts, we have presented the richness of those spiritual blessings which flow from Christ. "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." The spiritually hungry, who repair to him, never hunger any more, and the thirsty never thirst any more. "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." His blessings are so full and free that every spiritual want is supplied, and the soul is satisfied. Every branch of this true vine is laden with clusters a thousand times richer than any others that have gladdened the heart of man. How sweet to the taste! Yea, "sweeter than honey and the honeycomb." What "delicious fare" millions have had under its ample boughs! Elsewhere they have found only the "clusters of Gomorrah," from which the soul turns away unsatisfied. But here the largest desire is gratified, and the heart says "enough" to the vast resources of grace and strength. To the Christian the Saviour is "all in all."

There are blessings here for himself, his family, his neighbors — all. Call together the whole race of mankind to make known their wants, not one shall go away empty, except by his own choice.

Introduce the gospel into the most godless community, and there let it have free course, and what a change is speedily wrought! The people are blessed in their personal, domestic, social, moral, and religious interests. No other boon blesses them so largely or lastingly. The rich, ample clusters of Eshcol are but a poor symbol of the blessings that flow to man through Jesus Christ.

And then what virtue in this true vine for the sin-sick soul! "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." The fruit of the vine is a very appropriate symbol of the blood that was "shed for the remission of sins." In Genesis xlix. 11, the inspired writer calls the juice of the grape "blood." This, in connection with the symbolical use of the vine itself, points significantly to the blood that was shed upon the cross. Here thousands have been healed of their moral maladies, and now sit, restored, at the feet of Jesus. A new song has been put into their mouths, even

praise to God. Glad hearts they have, and bright hopes for the future, because they have tasted of the fruit of the true Vine. They break forth into singing.

"Bound hand and foot with chains of sin,
Death dragged me for his prey;
The pit was moved to take me in,
And hope was far away.

"I cried in agony of mind,
'Lord, I beseech thee, save;'
He heard me; Death his prey resigned,
And Mercy shut the grave.

"What shall I render unto thee,
My Saviour, in distress,
For all thy benefits to me,
So great and numberless?

"Henceforth myself to thee I give,
With single heart and eye,
To walk before thee while I live,
And bless thee when I die."

The vine is an emblem of delight and peace.

One of the most beautiful scenes in Oriental countries is a rural residence shaded by luxuriant vines from the burning heat of the sun. Such protection in extremely hot countries is almost indispensable.

Frequently the yard is furnished with trees, such as the fig and pomegranate; and these are completely covered with the vine, so that the whole yard and dwelling repose under a most delightful shade. Often an arbor is formed by planting fig trees, over which the vine is trained, and under its cooling shade whole families sit in sultry weather. The prophet alludes to this custom in those prophetic words, "They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid." There could not be a finer picture of domestic pleasure and peace than that of a family sitting beneath such a grateful shade in a land where the noonday sun often "smites" the wayfarer so that he dies. Hence the prophet makes use of the scene as a foreshadowing of that blissful period when the gospel shall have won its most signal triumphs, and there shall be none to hurt or destroy in God's holy mountain. Then the True Vine will have spread over hill and valley, and the nations will be at peace under its fruitful branches. In this regard the vine becomes a suitable emblem of Christ; for he is spoken of as a shadow for the joy and protection of his people. Thus Isaiah said of the foretold Messiah, he "shall be as a hiding-place from the wind and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place,

as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." The Psalmist, also, in view of unnumbered divine mercies, exclaimed, "Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the *shadow of thy wings* will I rejoice." And again, "He that dwelleth in the secret place shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." From the great number of times that the inspired writers have employed this figure we might suppose it was a favorite one with them. It is certainly well suited to express the delight and comfort that is found in him. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace." Christ came to bring "glad tidings of great joy," and to fill those that trust in him with "peace that passeth understanding." "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you." How many living witnesses are testifying that their peace is "like a river," and that their "joy is full"!

The vintage has always been regarded a season of joy. Long before it arrives it is the subject of remark and much preparation. Young and old look forward to it with high anticipations. When it actually comes, joy and gladness seem literally to fill the dwellings. The most pleasing associations are connected with the season to the grape gatherers; and besides, it brings them so great a revenue, as the harvest of their toils, that they rejoice in its

return. So the coming of Him who trod the "wine-press" of the wrath of God alone was, and is, if properly regarded, a cause for "exceeding joy." The day of Christ's death was the best day for this dying world that could possibly occur. It brought to the door of every dwelling, and every heart, what is infinitely better than silver and gold. It achieved for them what conquerors cannot win. It brought them a Saviour, without whom there is no forgiveness, and no escape from the wrath of God.

One of the prophets makes use of the following language, which deserves a brief notice in this connection: "I will allure her, and bring her into the *wilderness*, and speak comfortably unto her; and I will give her her vineyards from thence." Here is an allusion to the fact that deserts are dotted with green spots, or oases, where the vine will thrive luxuriantly. As even the desert will thus yield the fruit of the vine, so will the true Vine flourish in this world of sin and woe, which is aptly styled a *moral* wilderness. Where there is least promise, fruit shall yet abound. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose."

The union of Christ and his followers is symbolized by the vine and its branches.

This was probably the principal idea that Christ intended to communicate. "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

The import of these words is obvious. The relation subsisting between Christ and his people is intimate as the connection of the vine and its branches. When Christ calls himself the Shepherd, his children are his sheep. When he is denominated the Head of the church, his children are members. So here, when he calls himself the true Vine, his children are branches. The idea is emphatically that of *union*.

The branches are the same kind of wood as the vine, and are nourished by the same fluids. So true Christians are the same as Christ in the spirit and

temper of their minds, and derive their nutriment from the same spiritual sources. The same mind is in them that was in Christ Jesus. By this the world *takes knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus.*

The branches derive all their comeliness from the vine ; and indeed they add comeliness to it. So Christians are adorned with the beauty of holiness only so far as they are clothed with the righteousness of Christ. They have no moral attractions of their own, independent of Christ. All their graces, too, contribute in return to the moral beauties of their Saviour. The world sees more in him to admire when his followers are holy. They are so generally regarded as the "branches," that religion is honored or disgraced, in the view of men, according as they are faithful or otherwise.

The branches also draw their strength from the vine. The branches do not support the vine, but the vine supports the branches. The former are entirely dependent upon the latter. And is not Christ the source of the Christian's strength? Can he bear fruit, yea, can he live spiritually, without the grace of the Redeemer? "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me." "Without

me ye can do nothing." Weak and worthless is the believer without the aid of his divine Master!

Says Barnes, upon this figure, "A vine yields proper juice and nourishment to all the branches, whether these be large or small. All the nourishment of each branch and tendril passes through the main stalk, or the vine, that springs from the earth. So Jesus is the source of all real strength and grace to all his disciples. * * He sustains the same relation to his disciples that a parent stalk does to the branches. * * We become united to him in all our interests, and have common feelings, common desires, and a common destiny with him. We seek the same objects; are willing to encounter the same trials, contempt, persecution, and want; and are desirous that his God shall be ours, and his eternal abode ours. It is a union of friendship, of love, and of dependence; a union of weakness with strength; of imperfection with perfection; of a dying nature with a living Saviour; of a lost sinner with an unchanging Friend and Redeemer. It is the most tender and intimate of all relations."

It frequently happens that an individual is the sole dependence of an enterprise, and even of a community. Upon his words, actions, or influence every thing is suspended. All feel intensely when

his life is in jeopardy, and rejoice equally when he walks unharmed. The faithful ruler is an example of this kind. Let the destroyer lay him low, and his kingdom feels the shock from centre to circumference. The same is true of the commander on the field of conflict. His fall sends consternation through the ranks of the army, and often renders defeat certain. And in the family, what interests depend upon its united head! That head is the very life of the household. Let death remove it, and all its interests are scattered. And yet, these are not examples of absolute dependence. Governments have withstood the fall of the ruler, armies have survived the death of the commander, and families have existed after their heads were no more. But no Christian ever did, or can, withstand the absence of Christ. No church can maintain more than the form of godliness, without preserving this intimate union with the divine Head. Every thing hoped for and prayed for in the church must come through him. Christ said, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

To this intimate union reference is made in the Scripture in all those passages where expressions of kindness or contempt towards Christ's followers are represented as being made to Christ himself. "In-

asmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." When Saul was on his way to Damascus to persecute the saints, the Lord addressed him thus: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *me?*" And so in every instance where this subject is remarked upon in the Scriptures, what is done to the church is said to be done to Christ. This is a marked way of expressing the union of the church with its head. No union could be more intimate and endearing. Saints abide in Christ, and they in him. "I am the vine; ye are the branches."

Here we have a view of the nature of that union that will characterize the earth when it is filled with millennial peace. Heart-union with Christ will be the source and assurance of that reign of joy. It is one of the fruits that true sympathy with Christ produces. Heart feels with heart. Love responds to love. A type of its blessed character is had in a custom that prevails among the shepherds upon the mountains of Switzerland. "When the last rays of the sun gild the summit of the Alps, the shepherd who dwells the highest on the mountain takes his horn, which is like a speaking trumpet, and is used to convey sounds to a great distance, and calls aloud, 'Praised be the Lord.' As soon as he

is heard, the neighboring shepherds leave their huts, and repeat the words. The sound lasts many minutes, for every echo of the mountains, and grotto of the rocks, repeats the name of God." In like manner, this bond of Christian sympathy with Christ will be the pledge of that glorious season, when

> "The dwellers in the vales and on the rocks
> Shout to each other, and the mountain tops
> From distant mountains catch the flying joy,
> Till, nation after nation taught the strain,
> Earth rolls the rapturous hosanna round."

"I am the TRUE vine!" Other vines will drop their freshness and perish; but this is always green. Others bear only a single "manner of fruit;" but this yields "twelve." Others yield a fruit which, taken immoderately, injures the partaker; but the more we receive of this the more we are blest. Others provide only for the body and time; but this for the soul and eternity. Hence it is the TRUE vine.

Christian! every attempt to be holy without Christ is worse than vain. The branch cannot bear fruit except it abide in the vine. It cannot say to the vine, "I have no need of thee;" neither can the vine say to *it*, "I have no need of you." Though you are one of the "smallest and lowest branches

of the true vine," your life as really depends upon Christ, and is as essential to the beauty and excellency of the whole, as that of the more prominent believer. Fail not to recognize and seek for this hearty union of love and sympathy with your welcome Saviour. In the great day of account let it appear that you did abide in Christ, and he in you.

VII.

THE GREAT TEACHER.

"Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God."

Our Master, Jesus, went to preach
The gospel every where,
And by his own example teach
How we the cross should bear.

Our Master, Jesus, crucified
By hands of wicked men,
Prayed for his murderers; then he died;
He died, but rose again.

Our Master, Jesus, suffered this,
The world from hell to save,
And bring to heaven's amazing bliss
The freeman and the slave.

MONTGOMERY.

A TEACHER fills an office of the highest importance to society. Though his instructions pertain mainly to intellectual culture, yet he performs no inferior work for his fellow-men. He labors upon the foundations of the social organism. He handles some of the "first things" in human progress. What

he does often decides character and destiny. Fidelity on his part brings forth fruit "a hundred fold" to the "body politic." It is quite impossible to estimate the influence of a faithful teacher. It is experienced in the family, in the social circle, and in the public sphere. Every where it is beheld in the developments of mental powers for the duties of life.

But when with the intellectual we connect moral and religious instruction, the teacher's office is essentially magnified; for then he deals with everlasting principles. He touches the most vital point of man's nature. He moves the springs of human conduct just where they act upon the soul's eternal welfare. By the grace of God he lifts that soul from moral degradation to sympathize and commune with the Saviour of men. He drops seed that will spring up into everlasting life. He awakens aspirations that neither time nor death can quench. When works of art have crumbled to the dust, *his* work upon the immortal spirit remains imperishable.

If the office of the mere human instructor is of such importance, then Christ is properly called the Great Teacher. Nicodemus designed to honor him by speaking of him as such. He had heard of his wonderful instructions, differing so widely from

those of other teachers, and he desired to listen to his words for himself. He therefore approached him with the reverent address, "RABBI, we know that thou art a teacher come from God." The term "Rabbi" literally signifies *great;* so that the address was, really, no more nor less than GREAT TEACHER. That Christ is appropriately called by this appellation is evident not only from his qualifications, but also from the frequent allusions to this office in the Scriptures. He is said "to teach them" whatever he communicated concerning the plan of life. The "Acts of the Apostles" opens by pronouncing the previous record of the Saviour's life a "treatise of all that Jesus began both to do and *teach,* until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen." It is not necessary, however, to cite references upon this point. Christ is so frequently spoken of by the sacred writers as Teacher, that he is familiar to all in this office. His qualifications invite our attention. By considering the characteristics of an earthly instructor, we shall be able to exalt the Saviour more highly in this relation to mankind.

A good teacher has a good character.

It is true that a corrupt man may possess marked

tact in this pursuit; still he is not called, popularly, a good instructor. Parents and guardians are unwilling to commit children to his care. They understand full well that he has the power to corrupt their hearts by a pernicious example. They tremble at the thought of intrusting an immortal being to the charge of one who trifles with the truths of God. Perhaps there is no individual doing public service whom we more earnestly demand to be moral and upright than the teacher of the young. Even the suspicion of immorality would destroy our confidence in him, however successful he might be in developing youthful minds. The public demand an unblemished character in this office, and no mental qualifications can atone for its absence.

The influence of a pure or impure example is continually streaming from every living character, and especially if they occupy important posts. It is a remarkable fact that pupils imitate teachers, who command their confidence, well nigh as perfectly as they do their parents. They are eagle-eyed, also, to discover defects. The most trifling departures from dignity and uprightness are observed by them, and commented upon with childlike familiarity. Hence the importance and value of a spotless character for them to scrutinize.

Now turn to Christ. He came to teach the highest morality and purest religion ever inculcated. Before his, all other codes of morals and all other religious systems fade away. In comparison with his they are corrupt and worthless. Should not his character be proportionably excellent? Should not a higher degree of purity characterize his example? Thousands watched with eager eye to discover some blemish, that they might wield it against the gospel which he proclaimed. Scribes and Pharisees studied closely to find some secret, selfish principle of action, in order to silence his tongue, and destroy the power of his religion. Could the Jews have found a single doubtful act in all his career, they would have assailed him with ten times the ferocity that they did exhibit; and his kingdom would have received a shock from which it might never have recovered. In such circumstances a "character without spot or blemish" was indispensable.

Christ is truly "the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely" in his character. Language is too tame to express the purity of his life. The inspiration of the Holy Ghost is necessary to exhibit faithfully his transcendent virtues. Collect all the objects that are emblematical of purity and worth in the material world, and they

are inadequate to set forth the perfection of one whose spirit was never tainted by sin. The alabaster white of the lily, the blended hues of the rose, the serene brightness of a star, the clear, dazzling light of the sun, the pure lustre of gold and gems, and the taintless beauty of pearls and diamonds, are poor emblems of the Saviour's goodness. On all these material things there are the traces of imperfection; but there is not a speck upon his heavenly character. The dewdrop and sunbeam are less pure than was his sinless heart. "He lived for years, and was actively employed in a world in which every condition has its peculiar temptations, so that, of all the myriads who have ever inhabited it, not one has escaped the pollution of sin. But, like the sunbeam, which remains uncontaminated, whatever the object on which it may shine, the Saviour emerged from this region of guilt, and reëntered the portals of heaven as pure and unspotted as when he left the bosom of the Father."

Aptness to teach distinguishes a good instructor.

Learning alone does not qualify a person for this office. The choicest fund of knowledge may be possessed by a very incompetent teacher. He must have tact in his pursuit, or his efforts are comparatively vain. By this we mean that quality which

was so conspicuous even in the boyhood of Newton, when he distinguished himself by constructing models of machinery, and by the solution of difficult problems. The same thing, also, was manifest in Galileo, when, at an early age, he exhibited that remarkable ability which contributed to his eminence in meridian life. Nor is it true alone of this class of persons; it distinguishes all who have attained to any distinction in their different callings.

The successful instructor is not lacking here. By the possession of this ability he can render quite ordinary attainments serviceable. He accomplishes more than many who are far more intelligent. It is said that the great philosopher Montaigne, with all his learning, was not able to make his knowledge available for the practical purposes of life. He could study philosophy with success, but he could not teach.

One person is naturally more communicative than another. He can express himself freely upon all subjects with which he is familiar. He is able to command all the knowledge which he has stored up, and this makes him eminently practical. This difference is seen among teachers. The best have the most tact at illustrating and explaining the lessons inculcated. They cause them to appear simple,

clear, attractive. They draw their illustrations from familiar scenes and objects, so as to adapt them to the capacities of the taught. In this consists their aptness to teach.

How marked was this qualification in Christ! One of the striking beauties of his instructions, as contained in the New Testament, is the simplicity and adaptedness of his illustrations. His charming parables exhibit his aptness to communicate moral lessons. He drew his figures generally from common affairs and external nature, with which his hearers were more familiar. In this respect he differed from many of the wise and learned. The philosopher is disposed to find his similitudes in science; and the same is true of gifted men in other branches of human lore. But Christ adopted another and better plan. When he addressed a multitude upon the sea shore, he derived a lively image from the use of the "NET," which "was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind." At another time he availed himself of their familiarity with husbandry to exhibit the progress of truth; and he pointed them to the "sower," who scatters the seed upon his cultivated fields. Again, to illustrate the growth of piety in the soul, he called their attention to the "mustard seed," which was "the

least of all seeds," but whose branches furnished lodgings, at length, for "the birds of the air." Again, he directed them to behold the "barren fig tree," as a fit emblem of the worthless professor of religion. There might have been one of those fruitless trees near by, which suggested the figure to him at the time, and the eyes of every listener might have been directed to it. In such a case, we can easily see that the impression must have been deepened. He also taught them to appreciate the delight of God in the salvation of man, by portraying the joy of a shepherd over the "lost sheep" that is found. They had seen the shepherd leave his entire flock to search for the one "that had gone astray," and knew that he rejoiced "more of that sheep than of the ninety and nine that went not astray," so that they could not fail to perceive the moral truth which he would thereby communicate.

In like manner he employed familiar incidents and narratives to invest particular truths with beauty and power. There is the touching story of the "prodigal son," in which the compassionate interest of God in the repenting sinner is presented with singular force. There is the record of the "good Samaritan," whose compassion for a mangled, bleeding sufferer illustrates the nature of Christ-

like charity. And there is, also, the "great supper," through which he communicated to his hearers information relative to the banquet of love which the ransomed will enjoy in heaven.

Thus Christ employed the most familiar objects and scenes as mediums of successful instruction. The lily, the blade of grass, the corn, the wheat, the tree, the journey, the feast, the tower, and many other things furnished him with apt comparisons. In this way he adapted his lessons to the capacities of the learners, while, at the same time, he invested them with a peculiar charm. Clearness, chasteness, simplicity, and purity are among the distinguishing qualities of his counsels.

Moreover, Christ possessed one qualification, as the Great Teacher, which imparted an aptness to his lessons far beyond that of the best earthly instructor. *He understood perfectly the philosophy of the mind.* The more familiar a teacher is with the nature of mind, and the means of awakening its dormant energies, the more successful he will be. The most accomplished, however, can possess only a limited knowledge of this kind. But the Saviour's knowledge upon this subject was perfect, so that his example may be followed to advantage in both secular and religious instruction. He saw clearly just

what light the understanding needed, and what impressions the heart required. This penetrating view of mental and moral action in man rendered his method of teaching infallible.

We see here the distinction between knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge implies an acquaintance with facts, and wisdom a *right use* of them. Hence a very unwise person may possess much knowledge, and vice versa. The man who understands that industry is the parent of thrift, and indolence the precursor of poverty, is a wise man, if he act accordingly. But if he does not use this knowledge to his advantage, he is the opposite. So, also, he who understands the nature of sin, and believes that "the soul that sinneth it shall die," while he continues to transgress the divine law, is not wise. The Scriptures pronounce him "foolish" and "mad." This distinction between knowledge and wisdom is nowhere seen more clearly than among instructors, and it is inseparable from a correct idea of aptness to teach. In this regard the Great Teacher was eminently wise.

A good teacher is thorough.

This quality is indispensable to success in this pursuit. It consists in the effort, not only to render lessons intelligible, but also to cause the learner to

master them. It requires great patience and perseverance to distinguish one's self for this thoroughness. Multitudes may weary in their attempts to drill dull intellects in the whys and wherefores of their studies. It is the same thing over and over, day after day and week after week. Simply listening to recitations is comparatively easy. A parrot may be taught to recite a lesson, and a stupid man can hear it. It is one thing to repeat instruction, and quite another to understand it. The faithful teacher knows this full well, and aims to make his pupils thoroughly acquainted with the subjects which engage their attention. "A little, well understood, is better than much merely committed to memory." "Whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well." These are among his maxims in daily practice.

Christ was thorough beyond all others. His motto was, "Precept upon precept; line upon line; here a little and there a little." In our previous reference to the character of his illustrations, this fact is clearly seen. He not only presented instruction in a lucid and simple manner, but he presented the same truths in all their different phases. He showed their bearings in a variety of ways. For instance, the parables of the "Tares" and the "Draw Net"

teach essentially the same truth. The Saviour might have uttered these in different circumstances. At one time he might have been addressing husbandmen, and at the other, fishermen ; and these different illustrations were thus required to impress the same truth upon the two classes. Or he might have addressed the same individuals, once by the sea-side, and again in the open field, teaching the same lesson in these different ways, in order to adapt it to their circumstances and wants. Be that as it may, it is very evident that Christ aimed at variety in his teachings, that he might be understood. If necessary he enforced his teachings with a degree of severity, that the sinner might escape to the eternal refuge. He sought, also, to have "the man of God *thoroughly furnished* unto all good works."

A good teacher is kind.

By this we mean that he is characterized by that gentleness of spirit, and general good will, towards his pupils, without which he will fail. A fiery temper may unfit an otherwise competent individual for this important office. Rashness has no legitimate place in the school room. It will render null and void the wisest plans and the best endeavors. True, firmness is indispensable there ; but this differs materially from impetuosity and hasty correction.

Firmness is rather signalized by deliberation, and calm, persevering earnestness. It may harmonize perfectly with mildness. It is possible to be severely just and signally kind at the same time. This is true of God. The most unyielding justice and the most impressive kindness characterize his government.

The successful teacher is firm and mild. He conciliates his pupils by his kindness, and controls them by his firmness. The least expression of unkindness, on his part, breaks his authority. He may still hold his pupils in subjection, but it is servile obedience, such as fear begets. Men are almost as earnest in demanding that a teacher be kind, as they are in requiring that he be moral. Without it his heartiest efforts prove abortive.

We need scarcely say that the Saviour was kind. There is abundant proof of this in the very name by which he is called — SAVIOUR. Would he have undertaken to fill this office unless this had been a prominent element of his character? Well may we sing, —

> "Yes, the Redeemer left his throne,
> His radiant throne on high, —
> Surpassing mercy! love unknown! —
> To suffer, bleed, and die."

He was not kind to a fault. He was never led through this attribute to compromise justice. Sin received no favor from him in consequence. He showed, in his treatment of the self-righteous Pharisees, and of the money-changers desecrating the temple, that he could practise severity when occasion required. But his nature was the embodiment of all that is gentle and lovely. When the prophets foretold his advent, they spoke of him in language like the following: "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench; he shall bring forth judgment unto truth." "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy." Such was the character ascribed to him by men filled with the Holy Ghost, ages before he came in the flesh.

His emblem in the Scriptures is the most innocent of living creatures — the LAMB. Nothing could more aptly express the gentleness and meekness of the Redeemer than this chosen emblem. The mention of it awakens in the heart a class of the most

delightful emotions. It appeals to the highest and tenderest part of our natures.

We look in vain through the whole career of Christ for any of those bitter feelings which mar human nature. There is not the slightest trace of censoriousness or fault-finding in all his intercourse with men. There was nothing of reserve or coldness — those cheerless qualities, which ever attend a lack of kindness. His deeds of mercy proceeded from a deep fountain of unfeigned love in his soul. They were but the outward symbols of an inner well-spring of goodness. With a heartiness that was never equalled, he made his offers of life even to his foes. And now, with what tender forbearance he treats us! With what long suffering he endures our ingratitude and neglect! How long his patience continues when his best lessons appear to be lost upon us! No earthly teacher ever bore with a thankless learner as he bears with his erring children. Mercy upon mercy, gift upon gift, from his gracious hand, while we forget the Giver! "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." He "will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." Such a kind, gentle, winning nature,

who can fail to love? Whither shall we go to discover another to liken unto it?

> "Were the whole realm of nature mine,
> That were a present far too small;
> Love so amazing, so divine,
> Demands my soul, my life, my all."

A good teacher is devoted to his work.

He pursues his avocation with singleness of purpose. His heart is in it, and therefore it is not a task or hardship to teach. He aims to benefit his pupils, rather than to find a pleasurable calling. It is not with him a mere work for self-aggrandizement or gain. A higher, nobler aim animates his soul. Here is the secret of his devotion to his pursuit. His enthusiasm is begotten at this point. His thoughts are not occupied with other schemes, as if his present employment were undertaken because he had nothing else to do. His whole soul is enlisted in the work, as the loved, chosen occupation of his heart.

There are numerous examples of the devotion of teachers on record — males and females — who have literally worn themselves out in this good service. With a zeal that puts to blush much of the heartless toil in the callings of life, they have pursued

this work in the midst of discouraging trials and difficulties. "Verily they have their reward."

But can the devotion of the Great Teacher be surpassed? From the commencement to the close of his public life, where is the least evidence that his thoughts roved to other pursuits? Where the evidence that his interest in his chosen work diminished for a single moment? From what act of his do we learn that the high and holy purpose that subjected him to "the form of a servant" faltered in the execution? These inquiries suggest the devotion that marked his public career. He became a martyr to his deep, unquenchable interest in his mediatorial office. The responsibility of disciplining immortal minds for glory was devolved upon him, and he felt it. He groaned and travailed in spirit to accomplish the design of his mission. He would behold every one of those minds a polished gem in the crown of life. With privations, sufferings, and death, he sought to develop them for the skies. The tongue of calumny did not dishearten him. The rebellion of learners did not damp his ardor. The alienated affections of once ardent friends did not blight his hopes. In a word, nothing that he experienced in the school of life abated one jot or tittle of the ardor with which he "taught the people knowledge."

A good teacher educates his pupils with reference to the responsible spheres which they may occupy in future life.

When the elder President Adams was engaged in teaching youth in the city of Worcester, one hundred years ago the present year, he said that "it awakened in his heart peculiar interest to regard his school as the world in miniature; that before him were the land's future legislators, divines, governors, and presidents. He had only to imagine that one was destined to become a merchant, another a mechanic, another a legislator, another a ruler, and thus on, to stimulate him to the most earnest endeavors."

This fact indicates what we mean by educating the young for future duties. They are to move in different spheres. Some of them will occupy places of distinction, and exert commanding influence for good or evil. They will control the offices and business of the secular world. In politics, in education, in religion, they will take the lead. They, also, will constitute the heads of families, around whom the purest affections and brightest hopes may cluster. In these and other relations they will leave the impress of their intelligence and virtue, or of their ignorance and vice.

The faithful teacher does not lose sight of this important view of the young before him. He is more or less mindful of the fact that education is required not so much for the present as for the future; that its principal design is to prepare the learner to meet higher responsibilities. The thought is calculated to incite him to more self-sacrificing exertions.

In this particular Christ was indeed the Teacher of teachers. In his view, importance was attached to man only so far as his immortality is concerned. He looked upon every mortal as advancing to a fixed and endless state of existence. As youth is the preparatory season for the duties of manhood, so he regarded the whole period of life as a preparation for eternity. All of its experiences were related, as he thought, to the soul's everlasting state. Hence all his instructions were directed to this one important consideration. The burden of his counsels were suited to lift the thoughts and hearts of men to eternal realities. He saw within the bosom of the meanest mortal a soul that will exist when the light of the sun is quenched. Filth and rags did not hide from his view the lustre of a jewel that God made to contribute to the splendors of heaven. Therefore it was that he taught for the

future. He would have his pupils become "kings and priests unto God," and sit on thrones of power and glory, where sin does not reign. He would elevate them to the highest place of honor and happiness for which a benevolent Creator made them. This one thought determined the nature of his lessons and the degree of his interest.

The Great Teacher deserves tractable pupils. They should be as willing and anxious to receive instruction as he is to impart it. They should learn as readily as he communicates. To enjoy the tuition of one so wise and good as Christ creates corresponding obligations. His clear, impressive counsels cannot be innocently disregarded. Their misimprovement will be followed by commensurate condemnation. In the day of approaching retribution it will be found that the careless pupils of the Great Teacher merit the threatened punishment of his broken law.

VIII.

THE SOUL'S PHYSICIAN.

"I am the Lord that healeth thee."

How lost was my condition,
  Till Jesus made me whole!
There is but one physician
  Can cure a sin-sick soul!
The worst of all diseases
  Is light compared with sin;
On every part it seizes,
  But rages most within. NEWTON.

THE Scriptures speak of sin as a moral malady, and of Christ as the Great Physician. After Jesus called Matthew from the receipt of custom, and "sat at meat in the house" with publicans and sinners, he replied to the fault-finding Pharisees, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Here he evidently designed to teach that the soul is sin-sick, and that he himself came to effect a cure. As a physician is not needed among the healthful, so Christ would not be needed if mankind were righteous. It was a cutting rebuke

to the self-righteous Pharisees, who considered themselves morally "whole;" and they must have been impressed with the benevolent design of their reprover's mission. We refer to the incident simply to exhibit the view which Christ had of our moral condition and of his own office.

The Bible contains a faithful as well as fearful diagnosis of this moral disease of the soul. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores. They have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." The most loathsome and revolting spectacle on earth, in the form of disease, is thus selected as a symbol of this soul-malady. In other passages it is spoken of as blinding the mind, darkening the understanding, perverting the will, searing the conscience, corrupting the heart, and destroying the soul. All possible derangement of the moral powers is thus ascribed to sin. We cannot conceive of a more hopeless case in the sight of God, morally, than that of the dying sinner. Point to the emaciated, suffering victim of fever or consumption, in daily expectation of experiencing the "mortal agony," and passing into the eternal world; and the eye beholds nothing more

than a power that can destroy the body, without injuring the soul. Within that wasted and shattered form a healthful spirit may be rejoicing in hope of glory. The keen shafts of pain, and the arrows of the "last enemy," hurt not that living soul. It is safe when its fleshly tabernacle falls and crumbles under the power of inexorable death. But how different when the soul itself is diseased! Could our eyes be opened to behold its moral corruption and its torment, we should exclaim with the sacred writer, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Does disease waste physical beauty? In like manner sin destroys the *moral* beauty of the soul. Does the former paralyze the physical powers, so that they refuse to perform their offices? It is equally true that the latter palsies the moral faculties, and interrupts all the functions of the soul. Does one render inevitable the death of the body? The other makes the death of the soul equally certain. "The soul that sinneth it shall die" — die, not as the body dies, temporally; but die eternally, as nothing but the soul can.

Such are the inroads that sin makes upon the moral nature, except that our conception falls short of

the terrible reality. On every hand the ravages of this malady appear. It pervades every circle, and attacks every spirit. It wrings sighs and wailings from countless hearts. But thanks to Him who has provided a sufficient remedy. There is "balm in Gilead;" there is a "Physician there." A blessed voice comes from "beyond the vail," saying, "Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them, and reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth."

"Yes, there's a great Physician near;
Look up, my fainting soul, and live:
See, in his heavenly smiles appear
Such help as nature cannot give.

"See, in the Saviour's dying blood,
Life, health, and bliss abundant flow!
'Tis only that dear sacred flood
Can ease thy pain, and heal thy woe."

When man is prostrated by bodily disease, and it assumes an alarming appearance, he looks about him for a physician. "Who is best qualified to administer in my case?" he earnestly inquires. He loses no time, and spares no expense, in securing the attendance of whomsoever his heart desires. All do not make the same choice, neither do all exhibit the same degree of earnestness and wisdom in their

selection. But all alike ask for a physician. It is so in regard to this disease of the soul. As soon as man is aware that it has taken deep hold of his moral nature, and that his spiritual interests are in danger, he demands a remedy. He asks for some being, or some way to cure him. The untaught heathen inflicts tortures upon the body to heal this disease of his soul. He tears his flesh, and endures severe privations, as a remedy. The ignorant Papist, in a similar way, and with equal devotion, makes painful penance his mode of healing. The strict Pharisees depend upon the exact observance of the law, and "pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cumin," as their only hope of restoration. But others come directly to Christ, pleading with the inspired Psalmist, "Heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee." That the latter class are wise above all others, is evident from the following qualifications of the Great Physician for his office.

He loves the work.

A person is well qualified for no office which he does not love. A pursuit must be the choice of the heart, or it will yield neither enjoyment nor profit. To love ardently any particular calling is the assurance of success therein. Multitudes of failures, in the various pursuits of life, occur in consequence of

the heart being elsewhere. We are wont to speak of the *tact* of persons in different trades and professions. This tact cannot be separated from this love for a calling. It cannot be ascribed to a person who does not delight to follow his avocation. True, an individual may possess this quality without devoting himself to the profession to which it points. What we mean is, that in every instance of marked success, where tact is ascribed to a person in his chosen pursuit, we shall also find him strongly attached to his work. The clergyman, the lawyer, the merchant, the mechanic, the farmer, all must be drawn by this bond of love to their several employments, or die leaving little accomplished. It is equally true of the physician. The sinking patient would be quite unwilling to employ one who lacks this qualification. It is requisite to secure a degree of interest and carefulness.

But nothing can exceed the love of Christ for his work. He evinced it in every act. By privations and hardships, self-denials and sacrifices, toils and prayers, life and death, he manifested it. Never was there such self-forgetfulness witnessed as he ever exhibited. With all the trials and sufferings incident to the office before him, he cheerfully, and even rejoicingly, adopted it. He laid aside the

glory which he had with the Father, and left a throne of honor and power which he might have occupied all the while, for the sake of administering to the necessities of the sin-sick soul. Greater love than this for a calling can no man show. Often the prospect of larger gains, a more ample compensation, induces men to leave their wonted avocations altogether, and enter upon others less congenial to their hearts. To forego a lesser gain for a greater is common in the secular world. It is a principle of action with the multitude. But Christ denied himself the greater good for the less, so far as his own personal experience was concerned. It must certainly have been a greater blessing to sit enthroned in glory ineffable, where sin and sorrow never enter to defile, than to have taken upon himself "the form of a servant," and "become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." To the world it was indeed a greater good, since it brought "life and immortality to light;" and so far as an infinite flow of satisfaction from the fruits of his mission is concerned, it may have been gain to himself. But so far as regards his own personal experience in the flesh, (and it is of this we speak,) it was yielding glory for shame, joy for sorrow, and life for death. In this the Saviour proved himself abundantly quali-

fied to restore the soul of man. He came "to save that which was lost" *because he loved to do it.*

The Great Physician is tender and sympathizing.

Tenderness and sympathy are indispensable requisites in a medical attendant. The more deeply he can enter into the feelings and wants of the patient, the better qualified he is to do him good. This tender interest is so congenial to the heart of the sufferer that it inspires his confidence and love. He commits himself to the care and skill of such a one with the utmost cheerfulness. This sympathy becomes a kind of solace and support when experiencing intense physical pain. Human nature pleads for this in hours of weakness and danger. However insensible it has been to the warm charities of life in hours of health and strength, it calls for them in distress and sorrow. The opposite of this quality is spurned from the bed-side of the sick and dying. It has no business there.

The Saviour was distinguished for these characteristics. If there was one place on earth for which he was prepared above all others, it was where disease and death did their fearful work. History does not furnish us with such touching scenes as those which the interviews of Christ with the sick and sorrowing afford. The artist may find in these

fruitful subjects for his pencil. They present Christ in one of his most endearing relations to mankind.

Behold him as he first looked upon the widow of Nain, following the lifeless body of her deceased son to the grave! The sight of the afflicted woman, bereaved of her only earthly support, deeply wrought upon the Saviour's feelings. He drew near to the bent and sorrowing parent, with his heart full of emotion. "And he said unto her, Weep not." His words fell upon her ear with that power and solace which belongs only to divine utterances. There was that in this unexpected address of tender sympathy which must have bound up her broken heart. They were the words of one who evidently spoke from the depths of a sorrowful experience, and who fully appreciated the mother's anguish. As he gazed upon that stricken form, perhaps the remains of a most worthy, devoted son, his tenderness deepened, and he longed to see him breathe again. How many mingle in scenes of equal interest with a stoical indifference! With minds absorbed in the welfare of self alone, they have little sympathy to be expended beyond what concerns personal experience. But Christ possessed a different heart. He felt so intensely for that aged parent that he stopped not short of the exercise of miraculous power.

He commanded death to relinquish his victim, and let the young man live again. "And he that was dead sat up and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother."

This was a case of sympathy with the deceased patient's weeping friends. Christ had equal feeling for the patient himself. Behold him at the pool of Bethesda, where "lay a great multitude of impotent folk, blind, halt, and withered!" His attention was drawn particularly to a sufferer whose malady had been of "thirty-eight years" standing. "Wilt thou be made whole?" he inquired of the disheartened man. Perhaps the invalid had well nigh yielded up his hope of restoration in consequence of his protracted illness, and the failure of all remedies hitherto. This circumstance may have attracted the attention of Christ to the helpless man. There he had sat by the pool for long and weary months, with no one to lift him into its healing waters, so that all his expectations were baffled. But now the great Sympathizer was near. Jesus looked upon him with sincere compassion, and the old man's heart, perhaps almost withered by disappointment, felt the power of his tenderness. The end of his sufferings had come. The Saviour "made him whole."

There are also the cases of the nobleman's son,

the paralytic, the centurion's servant, the man sick with dropsy, the daughter of the Syrophenician woman, the lunatic child, blind old Bartimeus, and other instances of tender regard for the halt and lame, the deaf, dumb, and blind, all of which are illustrations of the subject in question. These examples of Christ's sympathizing interest in the bodily infirmities of men are symbolical of his regard for their souls. The desire which he cherished for their physical restoration is no more than a type or emblem of his desire for their spiritual health. He was not more earnest to save their bodies from the grave than he is, and always has been, to save their souls from hell. He did not feel for the poor, blind, disheartened, and dying wayfarer more than he does for the corrupt, unhappy, endangered, and perishing sinner. What melting words frequently dropped from his lips! "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

The deep sympathy of Christ for the sinner is consistent with the severest remedies which he ap-

plies to restore the soul. A good physician does not allow his tender feelings to lead captive his judgment. His compassion for the patient will not cause him to spare him necessary pain. He nauseates him with unpleasant drugs, and subjects him to painful operations, when the case demands such treatment. The loathsome draught and surgeon's knife are used by the most compassionate physicians. Their object is to save life ; and this may often require severe remedies. It is so with Christ. It is necessary, sometimes, to inflict great sufferings upon man to save his soul. The keenest bodily pain and mental anguish alone can bring him to the cross oftentimes. Disappointment, sickness, sorrow, and adversity, in every variety of form, are among the remedies which the Great Physician applies. He does not delight to see the unbeliever wretched. He has no pleasure in the remorse of the most guilty sinner on earth. But he prefers to see him suffer temporarily rather than eternally. He chooses that he should be afflicted and tortured rather than that he should lose his soul. This proves that his tenderness is not a transient burst of emotion, but a deep-laid and essential element of his nature.

The Great Physician is skilful.

Skill is indispensable in the medical practitioner

in the same sense that it is necessary to man in every other calling. This implies the possession of a discriminating mind, to discover the nature of the disease, and the proper selection and application of remedies. Unless the disease which is preying upon the system be understood, a fatal mistake may be made at the beginning. Instead of healing the patient, the medical adviser might, in such a case, aggravate the malady. His medicine might send him to the grave sooner than the disease. Skill also implies ability in the application of remedies. Here, too, a mistake may prove fatal. A wrong application of the right remedy might end the days of the sufferer. And yet, after all the skill which the best physician commands, the patient may die. The highest development of medical ability may be baffled by the nature and secret inroads of the disease.

But Christ possesses a skill which never fails. It was no easier for him to cause a sick man to take up his bed and walk, than it is for him to give health and joy to the soul. "He knows what is in man." "All things are naked and open to Him with whom we have to do." For this reason he never makes a mistake. He beholds at a single glance the fearful workings of this moral disease within. The resto-

ration of blind Bartimeus to sight was expressive of the ease and certainty with which he cures blindness of mind. The cleansing of the lepers with so much facility was significant of that more important cleansing which he performs upon the polluted soul. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." No matter of how long standing the sinner's case may be, nor how hidden and insidious his malady, nor how terrible its attack, nor how deep a hold it has upon his nature; the Saviour comprehends the whole from the beginning.

To recur again to his mission in the flesh as evidence of his skill. "Wherever he came, disease and suffering fled from his presence. His path might be traced from place to place in lines of life, health, and joy. Where he was expected, the public way was thronged with forms of helplessness, disease, and woe. Where he had passed, the restored might be seen making trial of their new-found powers; listeners formed into groups to hear the tale of healing, and the delighted objects of his compassion rehearsing with earnestness what had passed, imitating his tones, and even trying to convey an idea of his condescending ways. His voice was the first sound which many of them heard; his name

the first word which they had pronounced; his blessed form the first sight which they had ever beheld. And often, at the close of a laborious day, when his wearied frame required repose, the children of affliction besieged his retreat, and implored his help. And did they ever seek in vain? Wearied and worn as he was, 'he pleased not himself;' he went forth, and patiently listened to all their tales of woe, tasted their several complaints, raised each suppliant from the dust, nor left them till he had absorbed their sufferings, and *healed them all.*" *

Such was his wonderful success in healing bodily infirmities; nor is his success as a spiritual healer less marked. On every hand we have the evidence of his skill. In our persons and families the proof accumulates. Here one, and there another, is ready to magnify his "power to save." They have been made joyful in God. They can scarcely restrain their exceeding delight at the cure that has been wrought upon their natures. They call upon their souls, and all that is within them, to praise his holy name. They publish the fact abroad, and tell what the Lord has done for their souls. Others hear and flock to the Great Healer, crying, "Lord, have mercy on us." The news of his mighty works spreads

* The Great Teacher, p. 251.

from shore to shore. They come from the islands of the sea and "India's coral strand" to be healed. The dark sons of Africa, and those "on Greenland's icy mountains," lift their supplications, "Lord, save. or we perish." The "north gives up," and the "south keeps not back;" the "sons from far," and "daughters from the ends of the earth," come, each pleading for salvation. Thus the Saviour's name is magnified on almost every shore, and the voice of thanksgiving and praise from millions of rejoicing mortals ascends for the skill of the Great Physician.

The Great Physician is attentive.

This is another distinguishing trait of the good medical practitioner. He has too just views of the responsibility resting upon him to be negligent of the poorest patient. It is no small thing to have another's life committed to his trust, and to feel that he really holds it in his own hands. And it is even so. The patient yields himself up to the medical adviser as his only hope. The latter accepts the charge. He must do it if he would be successful. Any reserve on the sick man's part interferes with the triumph of skill. The physician must receive him in charge, to do for him just as he thinks best. He thus holds the lives of his friends and neighbors in his hand. Often several may be upon the verge

of the grave at the same time ; all their lives hanging upon his attendance. Each one of them may be the centre of a cluster of hopes and hearts, and this adds interest to the affecting reality. Think you that a thoughtful mind can become negligent with such a burden upon it ? When the nightfall brings balmy sleep to others, think you that the recollection of one or more patients who may pass into the eternal world before the morning dawns, does not sometimes banish "nature's sweet restorer" ? When the bell tolls the departure of a spirit, does not that mind, which has been so much exercised to retain it on earth, experience sensations peculiar to its own office-work ? Yes ; there is here a pressure of responsibility upon the good physician which leaves no room for negligence. With careful eye he watches the progress of disease, subjecting himself to inconvenience, and even to danger, in administering to the wants of the suffering. The terrible pestilence may drive others from their city homes to the country for safety ; but he remains at the couch of the sick and dying. From house to house, where the scourge performs its desolating work, he goes upon his errand of mercy, as one commissioned to meet a solemn duty. Even the night, which others claim to be theirs for rest, he cannot call his own-

The messenger threads the silent streets when the curtains of midnight have fallen upon the habitations, and his call must be obeyed. Weariness, nor sickness scarcely, can be pleaded against the urgent request. The elements may be raging in wild commotion; but the fierce storm must not delay his visit. The anxious patient demands his attention, and away he goes to bestow it upon him.

But the Saviour's care for the soul far exceeds this. "Without money and without price" he visits the humblest member of the human family. He goes to the lowliest cot, though it stand at the very gates of the Orient. The faintest whisper, the feeblest sigh, awakens a response in his heart. No pining mortal ever expressed a want, with proper trust, without sharing the ready care of this heavenly attendant. Is he a perishing sinner, tormented with a "fearful looking for of judgment"? This great Restorer is at hand, and says, "Thy sins are forgiven thee;" "thy faith hath made thee whole." Is he a believer, with a cheerful hope to animate him in his work, beset with trials and temptations? "Lo, I am with you always," is the assurance from those divine lips. Does he bend under a weight of sorrows? The same watchful being is nigh with a remedy. "My grace is sufficient for thee." Let his

wants be what they may, and his abode where it may ; let him ask ever so much or little ; let him pine in solitude, or sicken on royal couch ; let him have a "thorn in the flesh," or a sting in the conscience, — he has but to lift his heart fervently above, and the divine Helper hastens to his relief.

The Great Physician is wed, also, by the strongest love to his patients.

We have already seen that Christ loves his office-work ; but he also loves the patient with a love that "many waters cannot quench."

The most faithful physician may not love those to whom he ministers. He may be tender and sympathizing, skilful and attentive, and yet not feel any personal attachment to them. He may enjoy and follow his profession for its own sake, and glory in his scientific skill, and prove himself eminently successful, without a particle of genuine love for the sufferers. Not so with Christ. He so loved the race that he gave himself to die for their recovery. No hope of honor or fame, of wealth or power, allured him to the work. He came to effect recovery from the curse of sin, for which he paid the price of his own blood. He did it that he might gratify his love for man, and go about from one to another, knocking at the door of each heart, and saying,

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

Such are some of the qualifications of the Physician of souls, and he demands the confidence of our dying race. He is worthy of that confidence. No one can doubt his ability to heal and save. The language of all should be, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

A short time ago a stranger listened to the sad tale of suffering from a populous city where the pestilence was raging, and his noble heart yearned to administer comfort to the victims. Although he had started on a pleasure tour, long before planned, and anticipated with much interest, he, nevertheless, turned his course to the plague-stricken city. With the devotion of a Howard, he went from house to house to render assistance. He stood by the dying beds of those whom friends, in their consternation, had forsaken, bathed their fevered brows, and closed their eyes when death had done its worst. Early and late, night and day, he sought the smitten and distressed. He spared not himself, that he might carry blessings to desolate homes and hearts. He was every where hailed as an angel of mercy. The afflicted poured out their gratitude from overflowing

hearts. All admired his self-sacrificing spirit, and revered him as a man of uncommon benevolence. As an expression of their regard for his interest in their welfare, they elevated him recently to the highest post of honor within their power to bestow. They placed him at the head of their municipal affairs.

If this be well, as an expression of gratitude to man, with what emotions ought we to regard the Redeemer! When there was no eye to pity, and no arm to save, his own heart pitied, and his own arm brought salvation. In providing a remedy for the dying world he laid down his own life. He suffered infinitely more to heal the morally diseased than ever fell to the lot of man. While sin, with a desolating stroke which finds an appropriate symbol only in the raging pestilence, was hurrying mortals to the "second death," he interposed, and saved them by submitting to the pangs of crucifixion. Ought you not to magnify his devotion to your necessities? Will you not give him the highest place in your affections? Is not the deepest gratitude and loftiest praise due to him as the Great Physician, who "healeth all your diseases," and bringeth you to that world where "the inhabitants shall not say, I am sick"?

IX.

THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE.

"In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness."

Fount of rich, atoning grace!
When the two-edged sword of wrath
Flashed upon our guilty race,
Hanging o'er their hopeless path,
Then from thy pierced heart burst forth the flood,
To purge our guilt — thy own most precious blood.

Fount of being! fount of bliss!
Fount of sin-atoning blood!
Fount of peace and holiness!
Plunge, O, plunge me in thy flood!
Thus cleansed and blest, ere long my soul shall rise,
To drink from thee life's Fountain in the skies.

Rev. J. East.

A FOUNTAIN is among the most pleasing of natural objects. It is both useful and ornamental. From the earliest ages it has been highly prized for both of these purposes. In private and public gardens it has occupied a conspicuous place. Its sparkling jets of water have been a great attraction in royal

parks. At enormous expense, artificial fountains have been formed on public grounds. Scarcely any outlay has been considered too extravagant in providing this pleasant adornment.

It is, however, the importance and value of the fountain to Eastern nations that renders it an appropriate symbol of Christ. Dr. Chandler, in his "Travels in Asia Minor," says, "The reader, as we proceed, will find frequent mention of fountains. Their number is owing to the nature of the country and the climate. The soil, parched and thirsty, demands moisture to aid vegetation; and a cloudless sun, which inflames the air, requires for the people the verdure, with shade and air, its agreeable attendants. Hence fountains are met with not only in the towns and villages, but in the fields and gardens, and by the sides of the roads, and of the beaten tracks on the mountains. Many of them are the useful donations of humane persons, while living, or have been bequeathed as legacies on their decease."

The above furnishes a good reason for the frequent allusions of the inspired writers to fountains as emblematical of the choicest spiritual blessings. The Psalmist, in addressing the Most High, says of those who put their trust in him, "Thou shalt make

them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE." Solomon compares the counsels of a pious man, that are fruitful of good to those who hear and obey them, to the same object: "The law of the wise is a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death." When the prophet would describe the destruction of Ephraim's glory, he said, "His spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up." In Jeremiah God is represented as expostulating with the Jews in the following language: "For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, THE FOUNTAIN OF LIVING WATERS, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." The graces of religion that thrive in the believer's heart, and flow out to bless others, are spoken of under the same figure. "He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

The following texts refer to Christ: "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and uncleanness." "A fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim." The prophet foretold the great spiritual prosperity that would characterize the earth, in the following language of Jehovah: "I will open

rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys ; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry lands springs of water." Christ said of himself to the woman of Samaria, " Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst ; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

The use which the inspired writers make of water as a symbol deserves to be noticed more particularly in this connection. In the following passage it beautifully illustrates the riches of divine grace : " Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it ; thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water." Spiritual cleansing is set forth as follows : " Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean ; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." The bliss that awaits the ransomed of the Lord in glory is symbolized in the same manner. " For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto LIVING FOUNTAINS OF WATERS ; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

The foregoing will suffice to show the particular use of the symbol under discussion. From the

texts of Scripture cited we are able to derive the lessons which the FOUNTAIN OF LIFE suggests. As an emblem of Christ it is appropriate and instructive. A pool or a river is inadequate to express the fulness there is in Christ. They are limited, and may be exhausted when human wants are most numerous. Neither can they represent the intrinsic worth of the Saviour's character as the fountain does. The latter is well suited to express these and kindred ideas, as the sequel will prove.

A fountain is living, or fresh.

It sends forth no other than "living waters." Dead, stagnant water is one of the most repulsive objects in nature. It is the source of deadly miasm and consequent disease. On the other hand, a running stream is beautiful. Its murmuring, glassy waters lend a charm to vale and meadow. The eye never tires of gazing upon its meandering course, or of marking its life-giving power. A landscape devoid of streamlet or river lacks the essential characteristic of freshness. Hence artists draw largely from the natural divisions of water in perfecting their finest productions. But, to the inhabitants of the East, clear, crystal water must have possessed an attraction beyond its highest value to ourselves. Its scarcity in that region of arid deserts rendered

it a most coveted blessing. Burder speaks of this as follows, in his Travels: "The great scarcity of water was felt by all the people of the camp; and by none more than myself. I begged water from the negro slaves that attended the camp, but with very indifferent success; for though I let no opportunity slip, and was very urgent in my solicitations, both to the Moors and to the negroes, I was but ill supplied, and frequently passed the night in the situation of Tantalus. No sooner had I shut my eyes, than fancy would convey to me the streams and rivers of my native land; there, as I wandered along the verdant bank, I surveyed the clear stream with transport, and hastened to swallow the delightful draught; but, alas! disappointment awakened me, and I found myself a lonely captive, perishing with thirst amid the wilds of Africa." The Psalmist makes allusion to the same fact when he exclaims, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." The hunted deer is driven by his pursuer from his favorite haunts to "parched grounds," where he pants to refresh himself at some cooling stream; but often dies without the enjoyment. So David longed for the waters of life! He felt that he was in "a dry and thirsty land, where no water is," morally, and that

he must "drink or die." "O God, my soul thirsteth for thee," he cried out, in his extremity, comparing himself with the poor, hunted hart, escaping over the burning sands.

"Living water," then, is doubly precious in the East. The course of a stream through a desert may be traced as far as the vision extends by the verdure that appears along its banks. In like manner, a living fountain is often hailed by the traveller when he is many miles distant from it; for the green tops of the waving trees, presenting a striking contrast with surrounding barrenness, announce its existence. Says Anderson, "The brink of the 'watercourse' is in many places lined with a border of grass, along which rows of willows grow up, tall and green, which no Bible reader has ever seen without being reminded of this very passage: 'And they shall spring up as among the grass, and as willows by the watercourses,' containing at once one of the most beautiful of its allusions, and most precious of its promises."

A fountain, more than a river, pours forth pure, sparkling waters. If the foregoing remarks are true of streams, as they irrigate the earth, they are doubly true of the fountain. The fact renders the allusion to Christ singularly apt. When he ad-

dressed the woman of Samaria at the Well of Jacob, he said, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee *living water*." God charges those who run after the world with forsaking "the fountain of LIVING waters." Christ is the source of spiritual life and vigor. He opens streams that make glad the city of God. He invites us to no stagnant pool of formalism. He offers life-giving precepts and doctrines to dying men. Moral verdure and thrift appear wherever his gospel spreads. The course of the "River of Life" can be traced by the luxuriant growth of virtue and piety. It is easy to tell where Jesus has been, in any part of the world. There Zion is "robed afresh." Moral desolation gives place to the "beauty of holiness." In this regard, Christianity presents a striking contrast with other forms of religion. Romanism and Mahometanism, not to mention other isms, have been like stagnant pools to some portions of the earth, poisoning the very atmosphere with their deadly effluvia. Nothing valuable in moral character has lived around these bitter, pestilential waters. The region where they abound has been a region of moral contagion and death. As if they were the

"fountains" in Revelation, upon which "a great star from heaven" fell when "the third angel sounded," we can almost say of them, "Many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter."

Contrast with the influence of such forms of religion that of the gospel of Christ. In another place we have spoken of the power of Christianity to renovate and save the world. We have shown that it imparts moral and spiritual life to the most barren portions of the earth. Hence the propriety of symbolizing the great spiritual blessings, which Christ bestows, by "living waters." The figure does not convey an exaggerated idea of the value of the gospel to mankind. It would be difficult to magnify this point beyond the truth. The very best of the human family do not appreciate the glorious boon as they will when they behold the fruits of it in the kingdom of God above. So long as the world stands, the fountain which Christ opened will send forth "*living* waters."

A fountain symbolizes the freeness of the gospel.

Nothing can be more free than water. Wherever it runs, man is welcome to partake of it. True, in some portions of the East, and at certain periods, we are informed that the owners of fountains sold it to travellers. But generally water is common

property, to be enjoyed "without money and without price." The rigid rules of proprietorship which men apply to other possessions are not applied to this. It would be considered strange and selfish to do so. Some travellers say that in those countries where they are exorbitantly taxed for every little service rendered to them, water is almost the only thing which they receive gratuitously. This being true, we may properly consider that the freeness of the gospel is suggested by the fountain.

This truth receives much attention in the Scriptures. It is one of the essential doctrines of salvation, so that its importance demands prominence. How touchingly John, the Revelator, presents this truth! "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." John had a vision in which he saw "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb." To that river of life he represents the "Spirit" and the "bride" as saying to the whole human family, "Come." No invitation could be more free. Even he "that heareth" is commissioned to extend the invitation to whomsoever he pleases. Isaiah extends a similar invita-

tion to all. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price." Here the great Proprietor of the FOUNTAIN OF LIFE is represented as standing by it, and inviting all, far and near, to come and drink therefrom. His voice is that of kindness and mercy. Benevolence breathes in every word of his gracious invitation. In that friendly word "come" is found a volume of meaning. It assures the immortal listener that he shall be welcome to a draught from this well-spring of salvation. A kindlier and more alluring invitation could not be expressed to mortal ears. He who has opened the fountain, and to whom belongs every drop of its "living waters," proclaims that it is free — free as the mountain air or summer's rain. Such texts as those we have quoted teach, not only that the blessings of the gospel are refreshing as running streams, but that they are *free* as the water of the desert to the thirsty caravan.

What a gospel is this! It cost the life of the Son of God, and yet it is free as the water in vale or meadow! It brings to man blessings too costly to be bought with gold, and still it is ours without the payment of a farthing! Wonderful gift! Another

such fact is not recorded upon the annals of time. It stands alone as an expression of divine mercy and condescension. It exhibits the boundless benevolence of Him who became a voluntary exile from the skies, not because he was sick of the glory which he had with the Father, but because he would make salvation free to a lost and ruined race. The very *cheapness* of salvation has been a reason why some have rejected it. It differs so much in this respect from human plans and enterprises, that it awakens unbelief. If a draught of the water of life could be purchased at enormous expense, there would be many Naamans to secure the precious boon, though they would perish rather than wash in the Jordan. The feature of the plan of life, which ought to excite the wonder and admiration of man, is thus turned against the character of God. So foolish is man! So ungrateful is the human heart!

A fountain possesses a cleansing property.

It not only sends forth living, but pure water. For this quality it is sought and highly valued. Flowing water purifies itself. Its motion prevents fermentation, while it aids to dissolve such putrid substances as happen to fall into it. It is particularly true of springs or fountains, that they become pure by the process of formation. The water

trickles through the pores and fissures of rocks, deeply embedded in the earth, thus passing through a process of filtration ; and at the same time, it derives from the earths and minerals that flavor which renders it agreeable as a beverage. The first outlet to the surface of the earth that presents itself, allows it to pour forth in the form of a spring, "clear as crystal."

Christ, as the Fountain of Life, is symbolized by this cleansing property. Mankind are sinners in no small degree. They are polluted in every part of their moral being. "Wounds, bruises, and putrefying sores" are employed in the Word of God to denote their spiritual condition. Every thought and imagination of their hearts is evil, and that continually. Of themselves, they think and plan wickedness, as if it were their chief delight. Hence the need of a Fountain that shall be cleansing as well as free. They desire to reign in heaven with the angels and the Redeemer. But they must be cleansed from their defilement before they are fitted to enter that everlasting habitation. Sin cannot enter there. Every taint of it must be washed away before the new song can be struck. A thousand fountains may be opened for man ; unless they will cleanse the soul from sin, they are worthless and vain. He is still unfitted to dwell in heaven.

Christ satisfies every want of this kind. It is a point which stands prominently forth in the gospel plan. When Zechariah foretold that there should be a "fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem," he said it would be done "*for sin and uncleanness.*" There was really no need of an open fountain but for this purpose. It might answer other ends, but unless this purpose were accomplished, all other things were comparatively vain.

Under the Jewish dispensation there was an imposing system of purifications prefiguring the cleansing blood of Christ. To that Paul refers in his Epistle to the Hebrews, as follows: "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God!" The design of all these forms and rites of purification was mainly to intimate the necessity of inward purity, without which no man can see the Lord. For the most part the purifications were performed with water, though sometimes with blood and oil. The water was to be drawn from a spring or running

stream, that it might be pure, and thereby become a more suitable emblem of the fountain of life.

The most dreaded of all affections from which the Jews sought to be purified was the leprosy, an infectious, foul disease, which has ever been considered a fit symbol of moral pollution. When a person was healed of this dreadful complaint, he was carefully examined by the priest who performed upon him the rites of purification, that he might again enjoy the society of his friends, and the privileges of the church, from all of which he had been excluded in consequence of his loathsome disorder. "The priest was required to take two small birds, and to kill one of them over an earthen vessel filled with river water, and sprinkle the leper with it seven times with a stick of cedar wood, upon which a bunch of hyssop was tied with a scarlet thread; after which the priest was to pronounce him purified, and let loose the living bird into the open air." (Lev. xiv. 2–7.) Here we have typified the cleansing of the soul from sin by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, as spoken of in the First Epistle of Peter: "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, *unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.*"

In the instance of the leper who went to Christ,

saying, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean," we have the truth under discussion forcibly presented. The beseeching leper was, by law and custom, separated from men, as sin excludes the wicked from God and the society of holy beings in heaven. His disease was the most loathsome of evils that afflict the body, as sin is the foulest taint upon the immortal soul. No human skill could heal his malady, as no human invention can wash away stains of guilt. Christ alone could make him clean, as he alone can now purge the soul from corruption and prepare it for the skies.

"The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin." "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood." "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." "And they sung a song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

Such texts show the value of the fountain opened "for sin and uncleanness." Looking back from them to the Jewish sacrifices, we see the connection of the latter with the Saviour of the world. Here, too, guilty man finds relief from the inroads of sin. Elsewhere he looks in vain. His moral contamination is removed only by washing in the blood of Christ. "Without shedding of blood is no remission." This idea of cleansing is happily embodied in the touching hymn, —

"There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.

"The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain, in his day;
And there may I, though vile as he,
Wash all my sins away."

A fountain symbolizes the fulness of Christ.

A spring or fountain is overflowing, otherwise it would not pour forth and water the surface of the earth. A never-failing well is fed by a full, inexhaustible spring. For this reason a wise man sinks his well until he has unmistakable evidence that he has fallen upon an overflowing spring. Brooks, and even small rivers, often fail. Were man always

dependent upon these for water, there are seasons when multitudes would perish. In Eastern countries this assertion would be fearfully verified. But the fountain possesses a fulness that renders its supply adequate when streams become dry under a scorching sun. Families and neighborhoods depend upon this source of supply without anxiety. They never anticipate a day when every well shall fail because the springs of the earth are dried up.

In this regard a fountain is a fit emblem of Christ. His fulness is a theme upon which the Scriptures have somewhat to say. "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." "And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." These passages show that there is something important in the fulness of Christ. What is it? Fulness! The term is replete with meaning. It conveys to the believer a most delightful view of his Lord and Master. In him is an ample supply for all spiritual wants. All

that is in the Father is in Christ. The love, mercy, and benevolence of the Godhead are found in the Saviour. "It pleased the Father" that he should lack nothing essential to the final triumph of the gospel. The dignity, honor, power, wisdom, and grace, that are needful for salvation, are his to display. His followers never find themselves in circumstances where his grace is not sufficient for them. Often the richest sources of earthly hope and comfort fail them, and they sit and mourn in solitary places. But the Saviour never disappoints. Among the thousands who have truly sought him, not one has turned away unblest. All, and more than the most believing anticipated, have been received. In days of darkness, when the church has been beset with foes, Christ has been her strength. When she has needed power to prosecute an enterprise, he has possessed it to impart. When wisdom has been required, his children have had only to call upon him, and it was freely given. When sickness has wasted the strength, or death invaded loving circles, nothing has been so precious to the tried as his sustaining grace. Thousands can to-day adopt the sentiment of Cowper, —

> "The billows swell, the winds are high,
> Clouds overcast my wintry sky;

Out of the depths to thee I call;
My fears are great, my strength is small.
Amidst the roaring of the sea,
My soul still hangs her hope on thee;
Thy constant love, thy faithful care,
Is all that saves me from despair."

A fountain is perennial.

This idea is implied in the foregoing. In the East, during certain portions of the year, quite important streams are dry. There, of course, a spring of water is more suggestive of this sentiment than it is here. But wherever a fountain exists, it suggests the thought of perennial waters.

The fountain of life is everlasting. It will continue to flow when all the rivers are dry, and there is "no more sea." We have already quoted the words of Christ, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him *a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*" The grace of Christ shall yield him a continual supply. Religion shall abide within him as a well-spring. Barnes says of the phrase "*springing up,*" "This is a beautiful image. It shall bubble or spring up like a fountain. It is not like a stagnant pool; not like a deep well, but like an ever-living fountain that plays at all seasons of the year, in heat and cold,

and in all external circumstances of weather, whether foul or fair, wet or dry. So religion always lives; and amidst all changes of external circumstances — in heat and cold, hunger and thirst, prosperity and affliction, life, persecution, contempt, or death — it still lives on, and refreshes and cheers the soul." And what is better, the last end is more glorious than the first. "*Into everlasting life!*" It is not only delightful to drink of "living waters," but the pleasure increases with the nearing of heaven. The sweetest draughts are enjoyed when the spirit ascends to quaff from the river of life. No more thirst! The everlasting fountain fills paradise with joy and gladness!

Reader, do you appreciate the value of Christ in the relation denoted? Suppose this fountain were suddenly dried up, as every natural source of water will be at the end of the world; can you conceive of the condition in which mankind would be in such a crisis? You can readily imagine what would be the scene, were every body of water on the face of the earth exhausted within a day or week. Such a scene is but an emblem of that moral desolation, misery, and unutterable woe, that would characterize the world, were God to seal the fountain of life. Christ is the only source of the world's true happiness and hope.

Dr. Shaw speaks of a prolific well or fountain in Barbary, the water of which is received into a large basin for the accommodation of travellers. Somewhere upon or around this basin is inscribed this warning: "*Drink and away.*" Robbers infest the region, and this counsel is inscribed there to put travellers upon their guard, and hasten them on their journey. They would naturally linger around such a refreshing spot, and thus expose themselves to the depredations of bandits. Christians may learn a lesson from this fact. They are disposed to linger in the journey of life. Even when regaling themselves at the "fountain of living waters," they need to be reminded that time is passing, and that "the day is at hand." Spiritual foes lurk about the wells of salvation, and Christian wayfarers need a kind note of alarm, that they may "drink and away" to the land of promise and safety.

Up, pilgrim and rover;
Redouble thy haste;
Nor rest thou till over
Life's wearisome waste;
Ere the wild forest ranger
Thy footsteps betray
To trouble and danger,
O, drink and away.

With toil though thou languish,
The mandate obey;
Spur on, though in anguish;
There's death in delay;
No bloodhound, want-wasted,
Is fiercer than they;
Pass by it untasted,
Or drink and away!

Though sore be the trial,
Thy God is thy stay;
Though deep the denial,
Yield not in dismay;
But, rapt in high vision,
Look on to the day
When the fountains Elysian
Thy thirst shall allay.

There shalt thou forever
Enjoy thy repose,
Where life's gentle river
Eternally flows;
Yea, there shalt thou rest thee
Forever and aye,
With none to molest thee —
Then drink and away! CROSWELL.

X.

THE ROCK OF AGES.

"They drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ."

Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee;
Let the water and the blood
From thy side, a healing flood,
Be of fear and sin the cure,
Save from wrath, and make me pure.

While I draw this fleeting breath,
When mine eyelids close in death,
When I rise to worlds unknown,
And behold thee on thy throne,—
Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee. TOPLADY.

FEW symbols are so frequently employed in the Scriptures as the rock. It is not used alone as a symbol of Christ, but is found in other connections. When Isaiah was describing the coming forth of Jehovah to judge the people for their wickedness, he said of the fleeing wicked, "to go into the clefts

of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth." In the prophet's day, men were wont to flee to mountain caverns and to the tops of lofty rocks, for safety from their pursuing foes; and here he makes allusion to the fact, in order to exhibit more forcibly the utter powerlessness of man, and the consternation that will torment his soul when God appears in his strength.

There may be in these words of the prophet an indirect pointing to the last day, which is described with great power in Revelation, when "the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman, hide themselves in the dens and *in the rocks* of the mountains; and say to the mountains and *rocks*, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." There are no objects in creation so strong and imposing as the rocks and mountains; and for this reason they are besought to fall upon the suppliants, and crush them from the sight of avenging justice.

When David was in deep affliction, his trusting heart found relief in the thought that God would

hide him "in his pavilion," and he exclaimed, "He shall set me upon a rock." He thus pointed to the sure foundation upon which his feet would be planted, though all other "strongholds" might be swept away.

In like manner, when the Psalmist desired to express his sincere gratitude for divine deliverance, and show what a source of strength Jehovah is, he said, "Who is a *rock*, save our God?" Who is worthy of being denoted by this symbol but the great I AM?

These references will suffice to show the general use of this symbol in the Word of God. There is another class of texts in which it is employed with particular reference to Christ. They are as follows: "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed; *lead me to the rock that is higher than I.*" "In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; for thou art my rock and my fortress." "The Lord is my defence; and my God is the rock of my salvation." "He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be moved." "Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds

blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock." "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." "And did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them; and that rock was Christ."

From these passages we learn that the term "rock," as applied to our Saviour, symbolizes A SHELTER, A REFUGE, A FOUNDATION, and THE SOURCE OF SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS. These several points will be examined in order.

Palestine was a mountainous country, and abounded in huge rocks, that afforded shelter to the traveller from the burning heat of a meridian sun. Allusion is made to this fact in the passage, "And a man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; *as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.*" Here the reign of a righteous king is represented as grateful to the hearts of his subjects as the shadow of a great rock is to the wearied traveller of the desert. Says South, "The shadow of a great projecting rock is the most refreshing that is possible in a hot country, not only as most perfectly excluding the rays of the sun, but also having in

itself a natural coolness, which it reflects and communicates to every thing about it." Says Campbell, speaking of the same thing, "Well does the traveller remember a day in the wilds of Africa, where the country was chiefly covered with burning sand; when scorched with the powerful rays of an almost vertical sun, the thermometer in the shade standing at 100°. He remembers long looking hither and thither for something that would afford protection from the almost insupportable heat, and where the least motion of air felt like flame coming against the face. At length he espied a *huge, loose rock* leaning against the front of a small cliff which faced the sun. At once he fled for refuge underneath its inviting shade. The coolness emitted from this rocky canopy he found exquisitely exhilarating. The wild beasts of the desert were all fled to their dens, and the feathered songsters were all roosting among the thickest foliage they could find of the evergreen trees. The whole creation round seemed to groan, as if their vigor had been entirely exhausted. A small river was providentially at hand, to the side of which, after a while, he ventured, and sipped a little of its cooling water, which tasted better than the best Burgundy or the finest old hock in the world. During all this enjoyment, the above

apropos text was the interesting subject of the traveller's meditation; though the allusion, as a figure, must fall infinitely short of that which is meant to be prefigured by it."

When we turn from these historical facts to Christ, and think of him as "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land," the figure becomes striking and beautiful. Inspired writers represent this world as a moral wilderness, where sterility and desolation abound without God's blessing. The forty years that the children of Israel sojourned in the wilderness is a type of the church in this sin-blighted world. There is much to make it "a weary land." Thousands of Christian travellers can testify to the heart-sickening things that occur along the journey. Trouble, in its varied forms, oppresses and overwhelms the spirit. But nowhere in the wide range of the universe does a shelter offer, save Jesus Christ. Upon this almost boundless waste of sin and sorrow, he is the only Rock that invites the weary and distressed. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This was the only resort of David, when his soul pined in sadness. He said, "When my heart is overwhelmed, I will cry unto thee; lead me to a rock that is higher than I." He would find some

protection that was more refreshing and sure than mortal man can bestow. He asked for something "higher" and more substantial than human wisdom and skill can provide. He must have a mighty rock for his resort, as the only exhilarating shadow in his tiresome pilgrimage. Multitudes have felt and prayed as the Psalmist did.

Go, now, and ask the Christian toiler in lands where moral midnight reigns, what Christ is to him in those hours of discouragement and sadness which are inevitable in a work like his; go, ask the same of the hunted victim of persecution, whom Papal tyranny has driven to mountain caves; go, put the question to the broken-hearted sufferer whom the tongue of calumny has robbed of life's best treasure, a good name; go, inquire in like manner of the sad weeper who has laid life's dearest object in the dust, with little to comfort and cheer the heart but light from the eternal throne; go to some godly John on the Island of Patmos — to some Peter in chains and in prison — to some poor Dorcas, whose memory is fragrant in the homes of the indigent — and to some Bethany sisters at the grave of a sainted brother — and ask them, "What think ye of Christ?" They reply, with one heart and voice, He is as "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

"Jesus, Saviour of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly,
While the raging billows roll,
While the tempest still is high;
All my trust on thee is stayed;
All my help from thee I bring;
Cover my defenceless head
With the shadow of thy wing."

Christ a REFUGE! This has special reference to peril from external foes. It is not a retreat for rest simply; not a place of freedom from mere wearisomeness; but it is a "FORTRESS"—a place of safety, where the violence of enemies does not reach. The following texts speak of this defence: "He shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks." This is said of the righteous man, walking in the fear of the Lord. He shall be as safe from moral harm as those who are protected by munitions of rocks are from physical violence. When David realized his danger, he prayed, "Be thou my strong rock, for a house of defence to save me. For thou art my rock and my fortress." He frequently broke forth in these words: "Thou art my rock and my fortress." At another time he exclaimed, "In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength and my refuge is in God." In such language, Christ, as the "defence"

and "refuge" of his people, is presented to us; and when we connect with these passages certain facts recorded in the Scriptures, the symbol becomes more striking. The rocks of Eastern countries formed a part of their strength. In times of danger the people retired to them for safety. In the Book of Judges we are informed that when the Benjamites were well nigh destroyed by the Israelites of the other tribes, they retired to the rock Rimmon, where they were secure. David frequently resorted to famous rocks for security, when pursued by Saul; as at Maon, Adullam, and Engedi. To the latter place he retreated with his people when his cruel and relentless enemy sought to destroy them elsewhere; and there they were safe.

Hence a rock is an appropriate symbol of strength and safety; one more fit could not be selected. And where is the Christian's safe retreat, but in Christ? What a mighty defence is that against which the rage of Satan and a wicked world have vainly striven! If Christ be for him, who can be against him? The wise man said, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." Often, very often, have those who were fighting the battles of the Lord tested the strength of this refuge by fleeing to it. They have

found the promise sure, "Whoso trusteth in the Lord shall be safe." Enemies may kill the body; but they cannot kill the soul. Christ is a perfectly safe refuge from all moral harm; and there are many instances of triumph on record, which seem to indicate that trust in Christ brings even physical defence. See Martin Luther in the midst of dangers that seemed to render escape from death impossible. Emperors, cardinals, priests, and popes combined to silence his voice and stop his pen; but their efforts only served to stir him up to more defiant measures. Many of his own friends besought him to yield to the claims of his enemies, believing that certain death awaited him if he did not; but his reply ever was, "I do not refuse to die if it be God's will. Take my life, but I must stand by the truth." At one time, when his destruction appeared to be sure, he said, "What is about to happen I know not, nor do I care to know, assured as I am that He who sits on the throne of heaven has from all eternity foreseen the beginning, the progress, and the end of this affair. Let the blow fall where it may, I am without fear. Not so much as a leaf falls without the will of our Father. How much rather will he care for us!" At another critical moment, he took a defiant stand before his enemies,

and said, "I, Martin Luther, an unworthy evangelist of our Lord Jesus Christ, do confess this article, that faith alone, without works, justifies in the sight of God; and I declare, that in spite of the Emperor of the Turks, the Emperor of the Tartars, the Emperor of the Persians, the Pope, all the cardinals, bishops, priests, monks, nuns, kings, princes, nobles, all the world, and all the devils, it shall stand unshaken forever! that if they persist in opposing this truth, they will draw upon their heads the flames of hell." It seems almost strange that he was not cut down in the most summary manner; but he was not, as the church well knows, to her exceeding joy. Whether he found Christ a "refuge" and "fortress," in those perilous times, may be learned from the following supplication which he offered to God through Christ. "O, the weakness of the flesh, and the power of Satan! If I am to depend upon any strength of this world, all is over. * * The knell is struck. * * Sentence is gone forth. * * O God! O God! O thou my God! help me against all the wisdom of this world. * * The work is not mine, but thine. I have no business here. * * I have nothing to contend for with these great men of the world. I would gladly pass my days in happiness and peace. But the cause is thine. * *

O Lord, help me. * * I lean not upon man. It were vain. Whatever is of man is tottering; whatever proceeds from him must fail. My God! my God! dost not thou hear? * * Forsake me not, for the sake of thy well-beloved Son Jesus Christ, *my defence, my buckler, and my stronghold.*"

Here is found the secret of his strength. Such a case, with its victorious issues, indicates that physical protection is sometimes vouchsafed to those who make Christ their "refuge." It is certain that a soul reposing with such confidence in Christ is exempted from *moral* harm. How calm and peaceful was the great reformer in comparison with the agitation and tumult around him! How safely his spirit passed through the corruption of that age! What a tower of strength was the Saviour to him! What a "refuge" in time of trouble!

Christ a FOUNDATION. "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock." Here is presented, by a parable, the foundation of the individual believer's hope. To the Jew this must have been a striking comparison. For

the streams that ran among the hills of Palestine, though dry during some portions of the year, were swollen by sudden and violent rains at other times, so that they rushed along their stony beds, sweeping away every object in their course, save the rocks that lifted their heads in proud defiance to the elements. Even houses that stood within reach of the swollen and overflowing streams were frequently borne away, and dashed in pieces. For this reason, the wise builder of a house in that country sought a rock for a strong foundation. When the Saviour uttered these words, his hearers could recall, probably, numerous illustrations of wise and foolish builders, from their own experience and observation; and this circumstance must have contributed to the force of the parable, as their attention was directed to Christ, the foundation of the believer's hope.

Again, Christ said to Peter, "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter; and upon *this rock* I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Here we have presented the foundation of the church — the entire visible body of believers. This passage has caused some discussion as to its correct interpretation; but that view of it which makes the term "rock" refer to Christ is alone consistent with other references in

the Bible. The gates of hell will not prevail against it, because it is founded "upon this rock," which is Christ. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

These texts present Christ as a strong, immovable, and everlasting foundation of hope. All things else are but "hay and stubble." A rock is one of the most appropriate of all material objects to symbolize this idea. It is the most suitable and enduring of all foundations, so that it has been sought for this purpose in all ages. Men have tried other materials, but they have failed them in the hour of calamity; just as other grounds of hope than Jesus have failed the sinner when the floods of death have rolled over him.

The grounds of hope for the future are various among mankind. One sect has one foundation, and another sect has a different one. Here one gathers together his own materials, and builds upon his own good works; and it appears well in the hour of prosperity; but when the winds of adversity blow, and darkness covers his path, he finds that he has built upon the sand. How many have shared in this bitter experience when it was too late to repair the evil! Death beds have borne appalling witness to this delusion. The dying words of thousands

have proclaimed more loudly than even the voice of revelation, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Said one at the door of death, "I thought I was safe; but the foundation of my hope is swept away. O, strange delusion, that has destroyed my soul!" Others have given utterance to language no less startling.

What a lesson is the past history of the church in regard to this foundation! It verifies the words of the prophet, "Behold, I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, *a sure foundation.*" Through all the storms of persecution that have swept over the earth for more than eighteen centuries, this rock has stood secure and unshaken. Other systems of religion have passed away, and are forgotten; but Christianity stands as firmly to-day as it did when the angels sang "Peace on earth" over the plains of Bethlehem. This is evidence to all believers that it is founded upon a rock.

And, with the glass of prophecy, we anticipate as much in time to come. The foundation is not only a rock, but it is the "Rock of Ages," as Isaiah denominates it. It will endure when material things pass away "with a great noise." It is this which

makes it "precious" to mortals desiring to build for eternity. If it did not promise to last beyond the tomb, it would be of comparatively little value. For there it is most needed. Surely the true follower of Christ may sing, —

> "On the Rock of Ages founded,
> What can shake thy sure repose?
> With salvation's wall surrounded,
> Thou mayst smile at all thy foes."

Christ the Source of Spiritual Blessings. This thought is communicated in the words, "And did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ." The rock from which the Israelites were supplied with water in the wilderness was typical of Christ, and the apostle refers to the fact in the text just quoted. As the children of Israel were refreshed and strengthened by that unexpected supply, when they were faint and weary, so are Christians revived and made strong by living water from Christ.

There is a painting of Moses smiting the rock in the desert, which represents both old and young pressing around with great eagerness to taste of the coveted beverage. Parents are earnest to bear

their children to the fissures streaming with the crystal liquid, and children equally solicitous to impart it to their parents. Some are hastening to bear it to the lame and sick. Others are assisting the infirm to reach the smitten rock. Some are falling upon their knees to drink, while many are crowding through the multitude to get their supply. The whole scene is one of joy and inexpressible interest. Some kind of emotion is depicted upon every countenance, as it comes bursting from each heart. You can read in the faces of the company that health, happiness, and life itself depend upon drinking of that miraculous supply.

Is not here a true symbol of Christ? How eager are the thousands, who realize their spiritual wants, to taste of Him! High or low, rich or poor, bond or free, old or young, they desire to drink and live. Parents are solicitous for their children, and children for their parents. Friend intercedes for friend, and even stranger for stranger. The well seek for the weak and feeble; and others go to the source of blessing for themselves alone. All seem to feel that "they must drink or die." Therefore they are earnest and sincere. Yet the scene in this regard is not what it ought to be. As there was not one among the Israelites who refused to drink of the

water that gushed from the rock, so there ought not to be one to turn away from the fountain of living water in Christ. Alas for the multitudes who thirst, but never drink!

In Christ is all the fulness of God. Every want is satisfied by his grace. No sincere follower of his ever went away empty. Millions have heeded his gracious invitation. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price;" and still there is enough for millions more. From this hour to the day of eternal retribution, the whole hungering and thirsting race might satisfy the desires of their immortal natures without exhausting the fulness of this blessing.

What encouragement is here for the true believer! His chief solicitude is for "a sure foundation." He is anxious that his hope may endure not only when his pathway is light, but also when it is dark and fearful. When the children of Israel were disheartened under their trying experience, and they were almost ready to sink in despair, we read, "They remembered that God was their Rock, and the high God their Redeemer." The thought was enough to chase away the fears and darkness of

their minds, and inspire them with new hope and courage. Deprive the man of God of this one delightful assurance, and his hope loses its charm and power. Amid so much that is changeful and uncertain, he needs to feel that something is immovable and indestructible. With the cries of disappointment and hopeless despair falling upon his ear from the throng that behold their expectations perish, he wants to feel that his feet are planted upon solid rock. And here, trusting in Jesus, he can have this unspeakable satisfaction. Whatever else will disappoint and perish, Christ remains to bless and save — the believer's hope — "ALL AND IN ALL."

There are those who have never attempted to build upon this rock. Let me say to them, Build with a reference to a day of trial. A foundation that will stand in a calm may be swept away in a storm. A hope that will endure in health and life may be worthless in sickness and death. Build, then, for the day of adversity that will surely come. You would have the foundation of your earthly dwelling strong enough to endure when the wildest tempest rages. You would have the ship constructed to weather the fiercest gale. Be as wise for your soul, and the day of everlasting retribution.

Near the Island of Great Britain, at the distance

of some miles from the shore, stands the famed Eddystone Lighthouse, to warn the mariner of the dangers that lurk beneath the waves. Nearly a hundred years ago that noble structure was reared *upon a solid rock*. It is a lofty column of heavy masonry, towering many feet above the highest billows, to defy the fury of the angriest storm. When the architect began to rear the structure, many laughed at the work as visionary and foolish ; and they said that the first violent gale, such as had often visited that coast, would tottle it down, and bury it in the sea. But the architect was not discouraged. For three years he toiled away at the work, until he laid the top stone amid great rejoicings. Still it was predicted that such a storm as visited those shores in 1703 would not leave a vestige of it behind. Within three years another such tempest did arise, and the people expected that the lighthouse would be demolished. Anxiously and tremblingly they waited through the boisterous night, and, as early as the morning light would admit of their looking through telescopes, many were seen gazing in the direction of that massive column. But instead of beholding it in ruins, there it stood in its silent and imposing grandeur, with the storm and angry sea wearied and exhausted at its base. And for nearly

a century it has continued to stand and mock the fury of the raging elements ; for it is founded upon a rock. That lighthouse was built for such a time, or it would have fallen at the first bursting of the gale.

A hope that is founded on Jesus Christ — "THE ROCK OF AGES" — and that alone, will stand in the day of the righteous revelation of God. That day will come as a thief in the night ; and he alone who can say, "Lord, thou art the Rock of my salvation," will endure.

XI.

THE HEAVENLY KING.

"And the Lord shall be King over all the earth."

Be ours, O King of mercy, still
To feel thy presence from above,
And in thy word, and in thy will,
To hear thy voice and know thy love;—

And when the toils of life are done,
And nature waits thy dread decree,
To find our rest beneath thy throne,
And look in humble hope to thee. HEBER.

WE have seen the Saviour in some of the more lowly relations of his life. We are now to view him as King. There may seem, to the superficial observer, a wide distance between a shepherd and a king. But we are to remember the high estimation in which the former office was held by the Jews, and also that the latter is to be regarded in a spiritual sense. With our modern notions of a shepherd's life, there is, indeed, a great difference between the two offices named. A king stands, in the view of

mankind generally, far above most earthly potentates in renown and power. He is surrounded with the various insignia of royalty, imposing as human invention and exhaustless wealth can make them. He lives and moves amid worldly splendors that dazzle the eye to behold. Such display is ever associated with the throne of a king. Hence it was that the Jews, anticipating the coming Messiah, looked for a king whose appearance and reign would outshine all former precedents. But Christ reigns without these princely honors of a worldly nature. He is divested of all these imposing distinctions, because his reign is spiritual. Viewing him in this light, the passage is quite easy from the humblest relation in which we have seen the Saviour to that of King of kings.

The following texts speak of Christ in this relation: "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee." The prophet Isaiah exclaimed, "Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." It is recorded that "Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest." Also, "Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God;

thou art the King of Israel." In Revelation it is said, "Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness, and the First-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth."

Here, then, is an important office in which we are to view Christ. The symbol suggests the following points of consideration: His Kingdom, Sceptre, Palace, and Crown.

His KINGDOM. A king possesses a kingdom over which he presides. This is implied in his office. The same is true of Christ. He has a kingdom inherited from the "foundations of the world." It is his to possess and control. Its spiritual nature we have considered in another place, so that we may pass to a consideration of other points.

The great design of human laws is to protect men in their inalienable rights — "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." For this purpose a complicated civil machinery is necessary, consisting of legislative assemblies, public officers, and statutes, all harmonized to secure the aforesaid object. But the laws of Christ's kingdom have no such object in view. A "citizen of Zion" cannot claim protection for property, liberty, or life. Emergencies may arise when all of these must be sacrificed for the good of the kingdom and the glory of the king. We have

only to recall what Christians have been compelled to suffer in past days for the truth's sake, to be impressed with the foregoing statement. Think of the thousands who have sacrificed, not only property and freedom, but life itself, for the Redeemer. Long chapters of human history are written with the blood of martyrs, and dreary dungeons and prisons are filled with their bones. The record of the apostles' lives has been reproduced, in substance, many times since their day. Multitudes have "had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonments. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented." The language of Paul concerning himself has been uttered by many suffering ones since he ascended on high: "In labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." And yet

there was no law of the Saviour's kingdom to which they could appeal for protection. They were the voluntary subjects of a government which gives no pledges of physical defence. Even the great Founder and Ruler of this kingdom himself became a prisoner and suffered death for the glory of redemption.

Human legislators can do no more than adapt their laws as nearly as possible to what is right and just, considering, at the same time, the circumstances and wants of those for whom they are designed. Aiming at this object, how widely different have been the laws of legislative assemblies! But the laws of Christ are the same for every people and for every land. For he possesses power, after he has enacted the law, to conform the moral natures of his subjects to it. Having expressed his will, he can execute it in the human conscience and heart. So that one law and one faith are sufficient for the world.

How unchangeable, too, are these spiritual laws! Human statutes are continually changing. The enactments of to-day differ widely from those of a century ago. Our most important and necessary laws have become thus perfect after repeated alterations. Two thirds of the time of legislative bodies

is spent in amendments and repeals. But the laws of Christ's kingdom never change. They are the same now as in the beginning. They will be the same till time shall end. Earthly governments will flourish, and pass to the grave of oblivion ; but these divine statutes will remain, founded upon the immutability of their author and the changeless constitution of man.

Coercion is a prominent characteristic of earthly governments. Even for many of the duties of benevolence, citizens are *taxed*. But the voluntary principle distinguishes the spiritual kingdom of which we are speaking. The king delights only in "free will offerings." Whatever is laid at his feet must be the gift of loving, grateful hearts. This is the highest development of renewed human nature. There is nothing more pleasant to behold than the willing mind and cheerful heart in the discharge of life's great duties. This feature of the Christian state invests it with loveliness.

No renowned bulwarks or fortifications are counted among the defences of this kingdom. No frowning Sevastopol bids defiance to the threatening enemies of God. No tried bastion fills assailants with discouragement. No mighty Gibraltar laughs at their puny assaults. No armed hosts, panoplied

in glittering steel, move on to conquest. No tramp of war, or sound of booming cannon, is heard throughout this spiritual empire. No smoke, or fire, or "garments rolled in blood," proclaim aggression. The battle-cry and shriek of agony are unheard from "centre to circumference" of this sacred domain. "Peace on earth, good will to men," is the proclamation that angel messengers of God bear far and wide. Hence, love is the weapon, and holiness the armor and defence, of "God's elect."

A writer * speaks of other features of this kingdom as follows: "The court of an earthly state is the rendezvous of its pomp, the focus of its splendor; a spectacle which the eyes of its people never weary to behold. His [Christ's] court is invisible; and, though he comes to give audience to his people, and to receive their petitions, his presence is unseen — the object of their faith. Under the dominion of earthly princes, a graduated scale is applied to society, dividing it into ranks, and assigning to each its appropriate elevation and distinction; under the administration of the gospel kingdom, said Christ, it "shall not be so; but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.' 'For one is your Master,

* Dr. Harris.

even Christ, and all ye are brethren.' Under the former, society is a cone, the high places of which are occupied by those who, in proportion to their elevation, speak with authority to the circles below them; under the latter, society is a plane, on which all artificial distinctions are levelled and lost; the rich descending from their elevated station, the poor emerging from their obscure retreats, and both depositing their respective badges, they are enrolled in his kingdom by one common appellation, enter his presence and encircle his throne on the same low basement. Whatever their distinctions as the subjects of earthly princes, as the subjects of his empire, their wants, and obligations, and destiny exactly coincide, and place them on a perfect equality, while the only scope they have for emulation is a contest of humility, devotedness, and love — a race of holiness; and to the splendor of holiness, being an order of splendor by itself, no earthly distinction can add a ray of lustre."

Next consider his SCEPTRE. A sceptre is an emblem of sovereign power supposed to be swayed by kings. Reference is made to it in the following texts. When Esther, the queen, appeared before Ahasuerus in behalf of her doomed people, we read that "the king held out the golden sceptre towards

Esther. So Esther arose and stood before the king." The monarch possessed such absolute power that even his own queen could not stand in his presence without a signal by that symbol of power. When Isaiah spoke of the discomfiture of the regal enemies of Israel, he said, "The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked, and the SCEPTRE of the rulers." The breaking of a sceptre is synonymous with defeat or overthrow.

The reign of Christ was foretold in these words: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh (Messiah) come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."

In the forty fifth Psalm we have an impressive description of Christ as the expected King. "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies, whereby the people fall under thee. Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; the SCEPTRE of thy kingdom is a right sceptre." That these words are the language of prophecy, pointing to Christ, is evident from the fact that Paul quotes

the last passage in his letter to the Hebrews, and decides its application by saying, "But UNTO THE SON he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; a SCEPTRE of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." Says Barnes, "The writer imagined to himself a magnificent and beautiful prince — a prince riding prosperously in his conquests, swaying a permanent and wide dominion, clothed in rich and splendid vestments, eminently upright and pure, and scattering blessings every where; and that prince was the Messiah. The Psalm, therefore, I regard as relating originally and exclusively to Christ, and though, in the interpretation, the *circumstances* should not be unduly pressed, nor an attempt be made to *spiritualize* them, yet the whole is a glowing and most beautiful description of Christ as a King."

The sceptre, then, symbolizes the sovereign reign of Christ. His dominion is higher and larger than any other dominion. His will is supreme law with his subjects. There is no alternative remaining to them, when they know his will, but to obey. No doubt, no question of expediency or privilege, can be raised. For this is rebellion to the great Ruler. It is arraying the human against the divine will. It

is incipient insurrection under the government of our Lord.

How clearly, then, does the kingship of Christ exalt the higher above the lower law! Human statutes must not conflict with the divine. The Christian is a citizen of Christ's kingdom, with responsibilities and duties relating thereto that are paramount to all others. If his obligations to human governments do not conflict with his duties to Christ, it is well. Then he may conduct faithfully in both relations, and please both the earthly and the heavenly king. But when such a conflict arises, he becomes rebellious to Christ, if he allows the claims of the lower to supersede those of the higher law. Our heavenly King breaks the sceptre of those rulers who encroach upon his kingdom. He rules them with a rod of iron, and dashes them in pieces like a potter's vessel. It is the only way to maintain his sovereignty. Let human interests override the most unimportant of his laws with impunity, and his dominion is not absolute. His authority is limited, and the honor and glory of his reign depart. This idea is alone reconcilable with such words of inspiration as these: "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wil-

derness shall bow before him ; and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents ; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him ; all nations shall serve him." The great apostle takes up this animating thought, and says, " God also hath exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name ; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in the earth, and things under the earth ; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." How can these words be verified in Christ unless his kingdom shall claim the precedence over all other kingdoms? How will his enemies "lick the dust," if they command the obedience of his subjects in a single particular that compromises the truth? There is no such thing as the sovereign rule of Christ, unless he puts opposing earthly governments under his feet. It circumscribes his authority and dominion to allow the smallest encroachment upon his empire. His subjects have no right to yield one iota at this point. They are unfaithful and disloyal if they do.

Earthly kings seek empire. It has ever been a struggle with the monarchs of the earth to enlarge

their borders. The old world is now rocking with the convulsions of war, waged for the acquisition of territory. Rivers of human blood are poured out to glut this insatiate thirst for power. It is unbridled and unholy ambition that impels the rulers of earth to increase their domains. But Christ seeks the empire of the world for another purpose. He is moving on from conquest to conquest for the sake of renewing and saving the lost race. He plainly asserts that he will subjugate the world to himself, and hold universal sway, but only to scatter the blessings of peace and salvation.

> "Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
> Doth his successive journeys run;
> His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
> Till moons shall wax and wane no more."

The Scriptures express a thought in this connection which deserves notice. The human heart is spoken of as a kingdom for the reign of Christ. Its sinful appetites and passions are so many belligerent subjects whom Christ commands to obey. When he occupies its throne, and sways the sceptre of his moral power, peace, love, and joy abound. Every sinful propensity is held in willing subjection. The perverse will, otherwise openly rebellious, yields

to the supreme authority of its divine King. It claims no superiority over the enlightened conscience, which the Saviour employs as a minister of justice and right. This is the only way to promote the purity and happiness of the inner man. A complete surrender of the whole moral being to the control of Christ is indispensable to spiritual prosperity and happiness. When the subjects of an earthly ruler have implicit confidence in his character and government, the best and only way to secure the largest amount of happiness to themselves, and the most coveted stability to their government, is to allow him to reign with undisputed authority. In like manner, the heart must yield to Christ. He is worthy to maintain absolute control of its immortal interests, and comprehends better than the proudest intellect what are its wants and destiny. Complete submission to his authority alone will bring the joys of immortality.

The King's PALACE deserves to be briefly noticed. Kings dwell in palaces, enriched and beautified by every embellishment of wealth and art. Perhaps human ingenuity was never taxed more severely, or earthly treasures lavished more profusely, than they have been for the decoration of royal abodes. Accurate descriptions of some of these examples of

regal splendor seem more like the pictures of inflated fancy than living realities.

The palace which Louis XIV. caused to be erected at Versailles cost the almost incredible sum of two hundred millions of dollars. More than thirty thousand laborers were employed for a long time upon the work. The principal palace occupied the centre of a park whose circuit measured sixty miles. The grounds were adorned with every thing that taste could desire, or art invent. Artificial fountains, cascades, and lakes contributed to the beauty of embowering shades. Groves, lawns, and forests were laid out with consummate skill, and appeared in all the attractions of natural scenery. Even huge rocks were constructed of cement, and piled one upon another, to contribute to the naturalness and grandeur of the scene. The chief palace contained five hundred spacious apartments, each one of which bewildered the visitor with its magnificence. The king's suit of rooms was encrusted with polished marble, and rendered fairy-like with the nicest productions of the pencil and chisel. The queen's apartments were draped in the purest white, sparkling with gems and glittering with gold. Indeed, the interior of the entire palace dazzled the beholder with its profusion of gold and precious

stones. It seems as if the ambitious king sought to vie with the grandeur of ancient Babylon, whose ill-fated history is recorded by the pen of inspiration. And it was done to gratify the pride of life. No thought of good to dependent subjects, no respect for virtue or God, no desire to bless and save the poor, caused such royal buildings to be reared.

The symbol under consideration is applicable to Christ in respect to his abode. The Psalmist, speaking of him in the language of prophecy, said, "With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought; they shall enter into the KING'S PALACE." Where and what is that palace? It is alluded to by the apostle when he said, in the language of victorious faith, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Thither Christ ascended "to prepare a place," not only for himself, but for his disciples. It is an abode of such unparalleled magnificence that John employs the most costly of earthly treasures to symbolize its glory. He says its "light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; and had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the

children of Israel ; on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. And the wall had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And the foundations were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper ; the second, sapphire ; the third, a chalcedony ; the fourth, an emerald ; the fifth, sardonyx ; the sixth, sardius ; the seventh, chrysolite ; the eighth, beryl ; the ninth, a topaz ; the tenth, a chrysoprasus ; the eleventh, a jacinth ; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls ; every several gate was of one pearl ; and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass."

This figurative language is employed to describe the palace of our heavenly King, in order to assist our conceptions of its transcendent beauty. Yet, even with this emblem, we can only approximate to a correct idea of its glowing realities. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." We may stop and wonder at the splendor of this celestial court ; but we shall never fully appreciate its glories until we enter its "many mansions."

How benevolent the motives of our King in fitting up this everlasting habitation! "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also." It was not for himself alone, as the heir of the kingdom, that he reared the heavenly temple. His eye rested upon the sons and daughters of humanity in their moral degradation; and for them, also, he laid the foundations of that blest abode. He desired to see them, when removed from the hovels of earth, enter his palace of rest and innocence. Each one of his followers, anticipating the inheritance through a lively faith, may sing, —

"Jerusalem! my glorious home!
Name ever dear to me!
When shall my labors have an end,
In joy and peace, in thee!

"O, when, thou city of my God,
Shall I thy courts ascend,
Where congregations ne'er break up,
And Sabbaths have no end?"

It remains to consider briefly the KING'S CROWN. A crown is the emblem of honor and dignity. Hence it is worn by princes, as an indispensable dis-

tinction. This adornment is one of the most costly parts of a king's apparel. It is usually set with the most valuable brilliants, whose dazzling light blends with the glitter of gold that constitutes no small part of its material. The Winter Palace of Russia contains a magnificent "diamond room," where the crowns and jewels of the imperial family are deposited. "The crown of the emperor is adorned with a chaplet of oak leaves made of diamonds of an extraordinary size; and the imperial sceptre contains one, with a single exception, the largest in the world, being the celebrated stone purchased by Catharine II. from a Greek slave, for four hundred and fifty thousand roubles and a large pension for life."

The Scriptures often employ the crown for the purpose of conveying important moral truths. Thus Paul addressed the Philippians, whom he had brought to Christ, with the words, "my joy and CROWN." They were the great ornament of his ministerial character. Also, alluding to those who contended for laurels in the Grecian games, he said, "Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible." That is, the Grecian wrestlers sought a perishable wreath of fame; but the Christian strives for honors "undefiled, and that

fadeth not away." And when he was "ready to be offered," after finishing his course, he exclaimed, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." This is the reward that is promised to the righteous in Revelation: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a CROWN OF LIFE."

Paul said to the Hebrews, "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, CROWNED WITH GLORY AND HONOR." And John, in his enrapturing vision, saw Jesus with this symbol of dignity on his head. He describes him thus: "And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a GOLDEN CROWN, and in his hand a sharp sickle."

Notice the treasures in his crown. "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my JEWELS." And who are "they" but his blood-bought children? Precious souls, washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb, will shine as jewels in that royal diadem. These are the only gems that the Saviour will wear in his crown of gold. These will distinguish him, in the presence of the Father, as the King of kings and

Lord of lords. No other badge of his glorious mission to this world of sin and death will be necessary when the end shall come.

Pleasing thought to the pure in heart! Beneath the garb of sullied humanity, each one of this class carries a treasure that will make him rich forever in the skies. It is the only wealth that he can bear to paradise. It is all that he can contribute to crown Jesus there Lord of all. And is not this enough? What more would an heir of immortality do? What else would he become? An ornament and honor to Christ in heaven! A crown jewel to the great King! This thought, and this alone, attaches importance to fallen man. Divest the future world of this privilege and joy, and faith droops, and hope expires. A cloud settles down upon the brightness of the "Better Land." Death becomes terrible; and the grave is dark as midnight. But thanks that such a doom is not ours! Every ransomed soul will shine to the honor of Christ, when his enemies are wailing in despair.

There is a land like Eden fair,
But more than Eden blest;
The wicked cease from troubling there,
The weary are at rest.

There is a land of calmest shore,
  Where ceaseless summers smile,
And winds, like angel whispers, pour
  Across the shining isle.

There is a land where starlike shine
  The pearls of Christ's renown;
And gems, long buried in the mine,
  Are jewels in his crown. COXE.

XII.

THE SPIRITUAL REFINER.

"He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver."

The rugged metal of the mine
Must burn before its surface shine;
But, plunged within the furnace flame,
It bends and melts, though still the same.

BYRON.

The air is full of farewells to the dying
And mournings for the dead;
The heart of Rachel, for her children crying,
Will not be comforted.

Let us be patient; these severe afflictions
Not from the ground arise;
But oftentimes celestial benedictions
Assume this dark disguise. LONGFELLOW.

GOLD and silver are refined in the following manner: They are taken in their native state, and broken into small fragments, or reduced to powder. In this form they are placed in a crucible, with some foreign substance as a solvent, and melted in a fire

of great heat. The refiner sits beside the fire, superintending the process with the utmost care. Gradually the foreign substances are consumed or removed in the form of dross, and the gold or silver remains in a pure state. The refiner knows when the process is completed *by the reflection of his own image in the metal.*

In this refining process we have an image of that spiritual discipline which Christ superintends in the believer's soul. It is an essential work in the plan of salvation. Without it the dross of human corruption cannot be eradicated from the heart. Hence the many allusions to it in the Scriptures. "But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap. And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." In these words Malachi refers directly to the coming of Christ, who will institute a trying discipline for the good of his people. By the mouth of Isaiah, Jehovah said, "Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." By the mouth of Ezekiel he said, "As silver is melted

in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I the Lord have poured out my fury upon you." By Zechariah he said, "And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried." Job, in his deep affliction, alluded to God thus: "But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me I shall come forth as gold." The Psalmist also said, at one time, "For thou, O God, hast proved us; thou hast tried us, as silver is tried." Peter speaks of this heart discipline in the following terms: "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honor, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

These passages exhibit the character of that trial to which the followers of Christ are subjected in this world. The figure is well adapted to express the important truth designed to be conveyed. Its full, striking import may be most successfully presented by considering the subject according to the following analysis: The Refiner, Crucible, Dross, Gold, and Image.

The Refiner. It is a consoling thought that we are put into the furnace by an intelligent agency.

This affords ground for hope and comfort. It brings to the relief of the tried soul the precious doctrine of Providence. It connects benevolent design with human suffering. It brings Christ near in every part of our experience. It attaches significance to every arrow of pain and to every thrill of pleasure. We see nothing, feel nothing, possess nothing, which is unimportant. The scenes and events of each passing day have a meaning. They are pervaded by divine intelligence. They speak to us of solemn, momentous truths. They discourse about the soul, its wants, its culture, its destiny. This meets the demands of the moral nature. The soul asks for it. The scoffer may affirm his disbelief of the doctrine, and jest over the simplicity of the believer's faith in "a Divinity that shapes our ends." He may boast impiously of living without regard to the claims of God or the retributions of eternity. But let peril surround him; let him be brought to the verge of the tomb; or let him toss in a storm-beaten bark over a watery grave, and his terrified soul cries out for God. In such an hour he acknowledges the hand of Providence, and delights to feel that not a sparrow falls to the ground without his Father's notice. Multitudes of unbelievers have thrown away their guilty creeds

when sorrow or distress has come upon them. Then they have fled to Christ, as a covert from the storm.

Says Hannah More, "It is not easy to conceive a more deplorable state of mind than to live in a disbelief of God's providential government of the world. To be threatened with troubles, and to see no power which can avert them — to be surrounded with sorrows, and discern no hand which can redress them — to labor under oppression and calumny, and believe there is no friend to relieve, and no judge to vindicate us — to live in a world of which we believe its ruler has abdicated the throne, or delegated the direction to chance — to suspect that he has made over the triumph to injustice, and the victory to impiety — to suppose that we are abandoned to the casualties of nature and the domination of wickedness — to behold the earth a scene of disorder, with no superintendent to regulate it — to hear the storms beating, and see the tempests spreading desolation around, with no influence to direct and no wisdom to control them — all this would render human life a burden intolerable to human feeling. Even the heathen, in one of those glimpses of illumination which they seemed occasionally to catch, could say *it would not be worth while to live in a world which was not governed by Providence.*"

"Happy the man who sees a God employed
In all the good and ill that checker life!
Resolving all events, with their effects
And manifold results, into the will
And arbitration wise of the Supreme."

How unsatisfying were the best lessons of the ancient philosophers, because they were not imbued with this doctrine! Some of their precepts were marked illustrations of human learning and wisdom; but they lacked the life-giving power that Christianity imparts. Their most consolatory lessons could not divest sorrow of its bitterness nor death of its sting. There was no "*It is the Lord*" in their most pleasing counsels to solve the mystery of want and woe. There is more true comfort found in the four words of inspiration just quoted than was ever derived from all the studied philosophies of the world. Here believers in every age have stood firmly, when other foundations have vanished as the shifting sands. The celebrated and pious Robert Boyle found such uninterrupted satisfaction in this single doctrine, that just before his death he directed the following sentiment to be carved upon his gravestone: "GOD'S PROVIDENCE IS MY INHERITANCE."

Job was cast into the furnace of affliction, and his heart would have sunk within him but for the

thought that the great Refiner did it. Property, health, children, friends, all went, one after another. But he did not complain of wind, fire, or storm, nor refer his sad misfortunes to accident or chance. Such a course would have aggravated his trials, instead of relieving them. Behind all these immediate causes of his affliction he saw the great Ruler superintending and determining their action. It was no solace to him to understand the nature of the evils that swept away his property, cut off his children, and preyed upon his own physical frame. His support was derived wholly from his confidence in an overruling Providence. This made him an example of submission and holy trust.

This is the prominent thought suggested by the appellation Refiner. The trials of this world are not accidental. They do not spring from the ground. He who desires to purify us as gold subjects us to the fiery ordeal. He has charge of the work. He begins and ends it.

Next consider the CRUCIBLE. In connection with fire, without which it is useless, it is emblematical of suffering or trial in its various forms. Afflictions are compared to fire in the Scriptures. "Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." Such com-

parison is made because the trials of life are employed to purify the heart, as gold is purified by the application of fire. Gold is not fit for a currency in its native state. It must be melted, and separated from the foreign matter with which it is mixed, before it can well subserve this purpose. So it is with the graces of religion in the human heart. They are in the ore, as it were. They are mixed with human dross, and must be purified therefrom, before they will pass current in the kingdom of God above.

Let the crucible and fire, then, symbolize the troubles of life. Man is born to trouble, as the sparks to fly upward. There is not a moment from the cradle to the grave when he can say, "I am secure against the shafts of trial." Bright, peaceful hours may often delight his soul, but they are liable to be turned to bitterness by sudden disappointment.

"Roses bloom, and then they wither;
Cheeks are bright, then fade and die;
Shapes of light are wafted hither,
Then like visions hurry by."

Who can number the diseases that prey upon the human frame? What long-drawn sighs and piercing groans are wrung from the hearts of men! What

weary months of pain are the lot of thousands! How they toss from side to side, seeking rest and finding none! At this moment how many millions are weary of life, in consequence of their excruciating sufferings! In every land, on every shore, in every village and neighborhood, they pine away under the wasting power of disease.

There are also the disappointments and vicissitudes of life, relating to rank, wealth, and other temporal affairs. The surest hold upon earthly joys and possessions is uncertain. When human happiness runs highest, sudden change may blast every hope, and plunge the spirit into despair.

> "But while the glitter charms our gazing eyes,
> Its wings are folded, and the meteor dies."

Poverty, too, rules with a rod of iron. In the fairest portions of earth, where the eye beholds much that is beautiful, haggard Want still finds his victims. Cold, damp cellars and stifled attics could tell a painful story of privation. Under the very eaves of the most costly edifices there are hunger and nakedness. Many a suffering Lazarus begs crumbs at the rich man's gate. Many a widow of Sarepta thanks God for a little meal and a cruise of oil. Many a good Elijah would famish in his penury,

were it not for some commissioned messenger of God to bring them relief. The annals of the poor are sad enough to melt a heart of stone.

Persecution is a still hotter "furnace of affliction." This has been indeed a fiery trial to large numbers of Christ's followers. True, it is not so much a trial at the present day; but formerly it was the most common crucible into which Christians were put. By systematic methods of torture they were made to suffer and die. The most horrifying records of history are those which contain the sufferings of Christians for the truth.

A more universal trial is bereavement. It is the common lot of humanity. It enters alike the palace and the cot. The king on his throne and the beggar in the street are both pierced with this arrow from the quiver of God. The most fairy-like home is made dark and desolate as the grave by this sad experience. Nor is language adequate to express the anguish of a heart that is smitten with keenest sorrow. To see the dearest objects of earth struggling in death — to love with all the soul, and then to part — to hear the dear one speak for the last time, then fall asleep in death — to gaze upon the cold and motionless form, shrouded for the tomb — to follow the sacred relics to their silent resting-

place — to return to a home that has lost its charm — to miss the loved companion, parent, sister, child, by night and by day — to hear no more the pleasant voice and familiar footstep — to experience thereafter the utter loneliness that sorrow ever brings — this is what no pen or language can describe. The heart alone knoweth its own bitterness.

Passing over other forms of trial, we say, in a word, that the fire of affliction is fed in many ways. We have only indicated the nature of the discipline to which we are exposed. We have barely looked into the crucible of the great Refiner. We are forced to say, —

"It is a weary way, and I am faint;
I pant for purer air and fresher springs;
O Father, take me home; there is a taint,
A shadow, on earth's purest, brightest things.
This world is but a wilderness to me;
There is no rest, my God, no peace apart from thee."

This refining process reveals DROSS. This point deserves brief attention. Gold, I have said, is subjected to intense heat, because it is supposed to contain more or less dross. The process would be superfluous were there no alloy. In like manner the trial of Christians implies the existence of imperfections. There would be no need of subjecting

them to such painful discipline if they did not require purification. Their sufferings are disciplinary, and are necessary to purge their sinful hearts.

The best Christians are not without sin. The more correct views of their own natures they possess, the more sensible they are of corruption within. None are so excellent as to need no inward cleansing. However pure they may seem to be, however unexceptionable in their walk and conversation, however faithful to the church and God, however loved and lovely, they are not free from moral taint. The remains of pride and selfishness, a roving imagination and evil thoughts, are still traceable upon their moral being. Hence the need of trying them as gold.

Often dross is discovered where least expected. Imperfections that do not appear in prosperity become manifest in adversity. A sudden affliction sometimes extorts murmurings from a soul hitherto apparently good and true. Multitudes, in the hour of sorrow, have found themselves devoid of that patience and submission which they supposed were theirs. They imagined themselves prepared for any dispensation of the divine hand. They thought that the "old man" was really crucified, and that the "sin of self" was brought into subjection. But the

trial came, perhaps in an hour when they felt strongest. The uneradicated corruptions of their hearts burst forth in impatience and unbelief. They repined, complained, murmured. This was the dross appearing when subjected to the fire of moral discipline.

"It is not till the sea is 'troubled' that 'its waters cast up mire and dirt.' When all was calm, there seemed nought but purity pervading it, and ripple folded over ripple in the still brightness of its transparent green. But the winds break loose, the tempest stirs its lowest depths, and then all is changed. Thus we see it in the saints. When calamity breaks over them like a tempest, then the hidden evils of their hearts awake. Sins scarcely known before display themselves. The heart pours out its wickedness. Hard thoughts of God arise. * * Distrust and unbelief assume the mastery, and we refuse to acquiesce in his will. It seems hard to be smitten so severely and laid so low." Thus Bonar describes what is often the conduct of Christians under the chastisements of God.

We have the life of scarcely one saint recorded in the Scriptures who did not exhibit some imperfections when tried by the Almighty. Though David was resolute and brave, yet he fled in fear

from Saul, his pursuer. Though Lot withstood the temptations and corruptions of Sodom, he fell into drunkenness almost as soon as the city was destroyed. Though Ezekiel was renowned for his holiness and obedience to God, yet once he was strangely unsubmissive when the hand of the Lord was upon him. And Peter, though he loved his Lord most ardently, and felt sure that he would die for his honor, yet, when openly confronted by the enemies of Christ, wickedly denied him. In all such examples we see the effect of trial in revealing imperfections.

The writer recalls a striking illustration of this subject, which came under his own observation. A young woman who had been a consistent professor of religion for some years experienced an unexpected affliction. Her father was a sea captain. He was away upon what he considered his last voyage, having promised his family that on his return he would quit the sea forever. One dreary, stormy evening, the tidings of his death startled the quiet village. He had fallen overboard, and was drowned. The shock was overwhelming to the family. I hastened to the scene of sorrow, to comfort the bereaved wife and children. The young female of whom I have spoken was the most inconsolable.

Although friends might have expected to see her resigned, and although she might have thought herself prepared to meet such sorrow with a Christian spirit, yet her heart rose in rebellion. As I approached her, and directed her agitated mind to God for support, she said, "Cruel! CRUEL!" This was the only response that I could draw from her troubled heart—"Cruel!" Neither words nor prayer yielded her the least comfort. I left her with this bitter complaint upon her lips—"Cruel!" She was tried in the fire, and the dross rose to the surface.

Now consider the GOLD. The refiner is not rewarded for his labors unless he gathers of this precious metal. He expects that the refining process will yield him gold without alloy. For this he patiently prosecutes the work. It is not the dross, but the gold, that he seeks. This most coveted of earthly treasures is the object of his toils.

Gold is here the emblem of moral worth—holiness. Afflictions are sent to purify it, that it may shine in heaven. Christians become like Christ in this way. Job said, "When they are tried, they come forth as gold." The language of Peter we have already quoted, but may repeat it: "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than

of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honor, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Peter thus spoke of the *trial* of faith, and not of faith itself. The refining is more precious than that of gold, because its results are more glorious. A single shining virtue outweighs all earthly treasures.

The benefits of affliction are numerous. It was this consideration that caused the great apostle to say, "We glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope." In itself no affliction is desirable; but its blessed fruits become a cause for rejoicing with the meek and lowly. Again he wrote to the Hebrews, "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby." In the Epistle of James we read, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience." "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." In such language the benefits of trial are set forth in the word of God. To

quote all that is said therein upon the subject would be to quote no small portion of the sacred record.

Experience and observation fully confirm the foregoing. God blesses mankind more by what he takes away than by what he gives. The discipline is a more effectual method of training the soul for usefulness and heaven.

"We see but dimly through the mists and vapors;
Amid these earthly damps,
What seem to us but dim, funereal tapers
May be heaven's distant lamps."

Prosperity often petrifies the heart, but adversity stirs its moral sensibilities. The former magnifies self and the world; the latter exalts God and human accountability. "As the bee sucks honey from many a bitter herb, so faith extracts good from bitter sorrows." Many who have learned little good from sermons, books, or friendly counsels, have been taught much by a single affliction. Then they have heard God speaking, and could say with John on Patmos, "I heard a voice from heaven, saying;" and O, what a voice! Pride, vanity, worldliness, and hostility to God vanish at the sound. The hard heart is softened, and the soul's immortal interests become infinitely precious. The

world's richest blessings could never do this for a solitary probationer.

Said a Christian, in her severe bereavements, "After my husband died, and I had mourned bitterly and long, my heart turned to my children. When my first child died, all my grief came back upon me. The second died, and I murmured. The third died, and I was entirely rebellious. I thought God was cruelly and improperly severe upon me. But now the fourth and *last* one is taken away, and I am satisfied. I know that the rod with which my heavenly Father hath smitten me was cut from the tree of life." There was fine gold in her heart, and the Refiner brought it to the light.

When the widowed mother of President Davies took leave of his corpse, at the time of his burial, she addressed the weeping assembly in these words: "There lies my only son, my only earthly comfort and earthly support. But there lies the will of God, and I am satisfied." It was after Dr. Payson had been for some time a great sufferer that he said, in reply to the inquiry, "Do you see any particular reason for your afflictions?" — "No; but I am as satisfied as if I saw ten thousand reasons. It is the will of God, and there is all reason in that." Such exhibitions of high Christian virtue are the result

of trying discipline. When the process reveals such spiritual wealth, there is great gain. It brings its own reward. A long time may elapse before it appears, but the benefit will surely come. As Dr. Manton says, "Affliction is a tree that to the true and watchful believer bears good fruit; and we do not expect the fruit to form and ripen at once. It may be long maturing, but it will be rich and mellow when it is ripe. It frequently requires a long time before all the results of the affliction appear, as it requires months to form and ripen fruit. Like fruit, it may appear at first sour, crabbed, and unpalatable; but it will be at last like the ruddy peach or the golden apple."

We need not dwell upon this point. Every person knows that adversity is a blessing. The sick room, the house of mourning, the grave, have their treasure lessons. Who that has stood "where parting life is laid" cannot testify to this fact? What a place for touching recollections and better thoughts! With the memory of former friendships and interchanges of love, and with the present melancholy experience of broken ties, how sensitive the heart grows, and how it resolves upon a better life! Yes; from that silent dust rises an all-pervading influence that causes the living soul to realize its value and

destiny. The thousand endearments now parted with forever serve to exhibit the perishing nature of all other earthly relationships. The world dwindles into insignificance. Time increases in value. Life assumes new importance. Immortality commands attention. The claims of God are admitted. Conscience pleads. Heaven invites. Hell terrifies. Often the soul flies to Christ.

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrows are unknown."

We will briefly inquire concerning the IMAGE. We have said that the refiner of silver and gold continues the process until his own image is reflected in the molten metal. It is not enough that he obtains gold; he seeks *pure* gold. His reflected image is evidence of purity.

So with the saints. They are tried until the image of Christ is reflected by their hearts. "Whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord." This is the climax of earthly discipline. Adversity answers the highest end when this object

is attained. The spiritual Refiner patiently watches the process, until the heart, as a mirror, reflects his own face. Happy moment that, both for Christ and his tried follower! It is the consummation of a work whose greatest value cannot be known until we shall sit with our Lord in his heavenly kingdom. To be like Christ! Can any thing be more desirable to an heir of immortality? Can there be a better passport at the gate of heaven? It is the family likeness of "the whole family in heaven and earth." Who would not possess it? "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness."

If the Refiner's fire multiplies spiritual riches in this manner, then God should be praised. Trial is in no sense a calamity when it works out such an exceeding weight of glory. The continuance of the affliction is a greater blessing than its removal in such a case. It is hard for human nature to believe it, but this does not alter the fact. Whenever Luther received discouraging news, or was unexpectedly plunged into sorrow, he was wont to say, "Come, let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm," — the Psalm beginning, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of

the sea." He felt that the language of praise became him for the supports and consolations of religion. He would not forget divine mercies when experiencing divine chastisements. When smarting under the rod he would remember the needed correction. When cast into the furnace he would think of the forthcoming gold. It should be the same with every believer. He should recognize God in his sorrows as really as in his joys. He should keep in view the important object of his trials — his spiritual good. As his Master was made perfect through sufferings, so he may have to pass through the same ordeal, to shine as a star in the firmament forever and ever. He should rejoice in tribulation, rather than lose his crown of life.

O, talk to me of heaven! I love
To hear about my home above;
For there doth many a loved one dwell,
In light and joy ineffable.
O, tell me how they shine and sing,
While every harp rings echoing,
And every glad and tearless eye
Beams, like the bright sun, gloriously.
Tell me of that victorious palm
  Each hand in glory beareth;
Tell me of that celestial calm
  Each face in glory weareth.

O, happy, happy country, where
  There entereth not a sin;
And Death, who keeps his portals fair,
  May never once come in.
No grief can change their day to night;
The darkness of that land is light;
Sorrow and sighing God hath sent
Far thence, to endless banishment;
And never more may one dark tear
  Bedim their burning eyes;
For every one they shed while here,
  In fearful agonies,
Glitters a bright and dazzling gem
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